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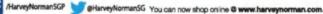
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NOW

The Latest in Design and Decor News





OBJECT OF DESIRE - SMEG FAB FRIDGE

With its soft curves, clunky handles and coloured body, the Smeg Fab fridge was designed to evoke a 1950s' vibe.

CHECK OUT -SOEK SENG 1954

Soek Seng 1954 might be in a far-flung location, but despite its quiet surroundings, the cafe is bursting with personality and life.



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ART -CHEAT SHEET: HOW TO TALK ABOUT ART

How to appreciate art and engage in conversation on this seemingly highbrow subject.



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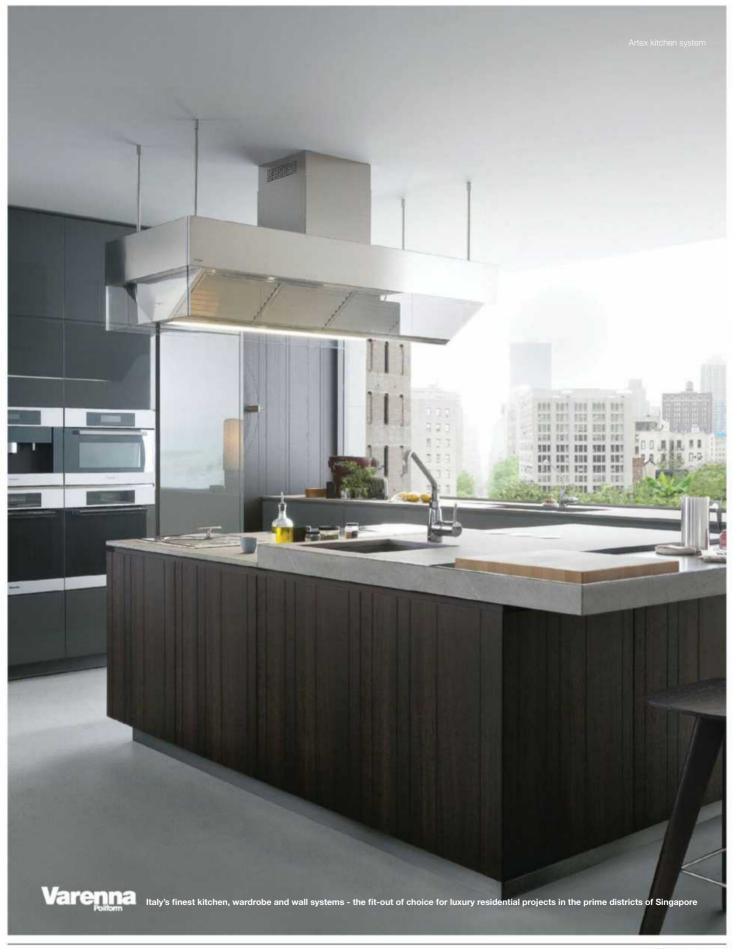
A Singapore-based, multidisciplinary design practice run by a husband-and-wife duo.



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You probably have more seats than any other piece of furniture – from sofas to loungers, armchairs to dining chairs and stools. We show you your options, plus how to tell a chesterfield from a cabriole, and a wing-back from a Windsor!

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BEAT THE HEAT!

We've put together a handy guide to the fan, refrigerator, and air-conditioner, so you'll know everything there is to know, at a glance!



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HOMES









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DISPLAY OF AFFECTION

Almost all the walls of this home were used to showcase the homeowners' objects! I02

ROOM FOR EVERYTHING

This interior designer's home features several looks in various rooms, all unified by colour.

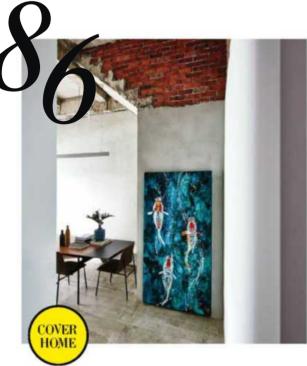
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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

By separating its public and private spaces, the mess in this home is kept out of sight! 116

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Textures and personal knick-knacks give this industrial-style space a welcoming atmosphere.







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I32

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Chic, luxe and dreamy patterns fall in place perfectly, like patchwork, to create a fresh and fun look for this home.

RUN THE SHOW

Royston envisioned his apartment as a blank canvas, very much like living on a film set!











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DIGITAL EDITION EXCLUSIVE

SEATING PLAN

A guide to arranging seats in an open-concept living room.

YOUR Q&A GUIDE TO RENOVATIONS AND MORE!

Burning questions about renovating, decorating, and maintaining your home, answered!

PROPERTY

For an estate still in the making Bidadari already has properties that are in high public demand; we uncover the plans for this garden oasis.







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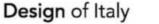
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creative mindsets

There's a quote I love from the great Albert Einstein – "If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?" I am, of course, of the cluttered desk clan - with stationery, magazines and guirky knickknicks fighting for space among the day-to-day information I need. My home is no better -I love being surrounded by things I cherish, such as books, and items that remind me of a great holiday or a good afternoon spent at a flea market. Are the homes of creative people naturally more messy? I would love to think so – but this generalisation goes out the window when you see the four homes we have in this issue, belonging to people in the creative line. Film-maker Royston Tan's apartment, in particular, is a minimalist concrete shell, and interior designer Sarah Tham's home is more classy than cluttered. Turn to page 85, and see creativity being expressed in delightfully different ways!

In this issue, we also explore two other subjects of great importance to any home –

seating and cooling. We have more seats than any other type of furniture in the home, but do you know the difference between a wing-back and a Windsor (both types of armchairs)? Find out, and see what's new in the shops too, with Seating Arrangements on page 64.

Can you live in Singapore without an air-conditioner, a fan or a fridge? Most (if not all) of us can't, and that's why we put together Beat the Heat, to help you do exactly that! Turn to page 76 for a crash course on these appliances – learn how they work, what the terms mean, and how to maintain them, so they'll cool your home and you, more efficiently.

Bonus!

We've put the most frequently asked questions homeowners have, on renovating, decorating, and maintaining their home, into a digital booklet you can download for free! Get *Your Q&A Guide to Renovations and More!*, from Magzter, the App Store and Google Play, now.

REBECKKA WONG
EDITOR

Repeable





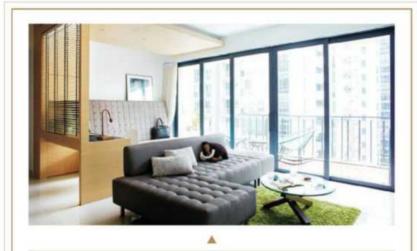
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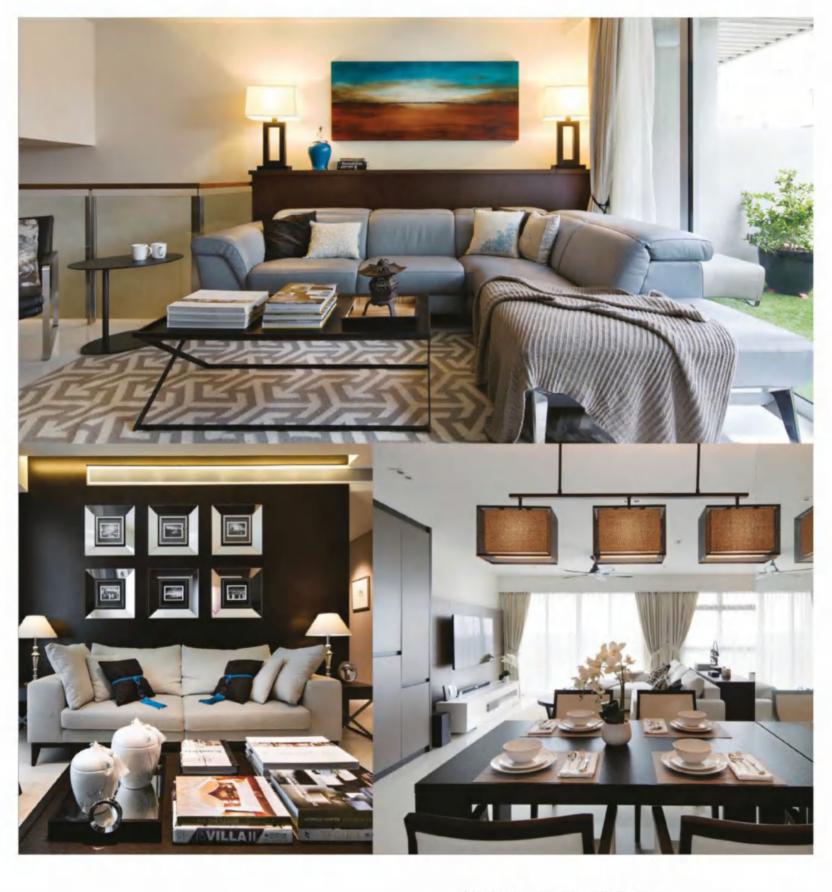




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In the March digital issue...



BONUS GALLERY

Seok Seng 1954 is a treasure trove of vintage bicycles and handmade art. See more pictures of this far-flung cafe at Seletar Aerospace!



BONUS VIDEO

His Pour table won him the President's Design Award. Watch designer Hans Tan talk about how he came to join the design industry.



BONUS VIDEO

Is the design of his home influenced by the cinematography of his movies? Walk through lauded local film-maker Royston Tan's home.



BONUS ARTICLE

The air-conditioner has become a necessary evil in most homes here. See how some homeowners have camouflaged the bulky unit in their homes.





The New Italian Designed Couture Stitch & Premium Leather Sofa Collection

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OUT & ABOUT

A look at our favourite snaps from *Home & Decor*'s Instagram account this month.

Follow us at Homeanddecor_sg to see what caught our eye,

what inspires us, and what we're up to!



The landscaping of Hort Park borrows cleverly from the greenery that surrounds it, making it look larger than it is!



The rustic decor in Laurent's Cafe complements the industrial elements and wood furniture, giving the space a warm ambience.



With unconventional interior design, Car-Rousel Cafe is themed around vintage automobiles!



HORT PARK

ROBINSONS THE HEEREN





That's a (picture of a) \$100 bill dangling from the end of the fishing line – can you reach it?



Eating at George Calombaris' restaurant, The Press Club, is a visual as well as gastronomic treat!



The grand (but not intimidating) decor of restaurant National Kitchen is befitting of its majestic location.



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Comic Book Effect

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The Imola Ceramica Pop tiles are available at Design Hub, 30 Tuas Bay Drive, tel: 6686-2002, www.designhub.com.sg.



OBJECT OF DESIRE

Smeg Fab fridge

BIO

With its soft curves, clunky handles and coloured body, the Smeg Fab fridge was designed to evoke a 1950s' vibe. It was launched in the 1990s by Italian brand Smeg and has since been dubbed the home appliance which melds fashion and function for its high-profile collaborations with lifestyle brands. The fridges continue to be manufactured in Italy today.



Smeg started out in the enamelling and metalwork industry in 1948. Smeg stands for Smalterie Metallurgiche Emiliane Guastalla, or "Guastalla Emilia Fnamel Works"

The Fab fridge is available in both right- and lefthanded versions, as well as single- and two-door models.

Smeg has collaborated with many fashion and design brands to release limited-edition fridges, such as a denim-clad fridge with Italia Independent and a striped fridge with Paul Smith. Pictured is the Union Jack model.

TRIVIA

In an effort to be environmentally friendly, all Smeg refrigerators are packed using non-polluting, recyclable materials. They've also been awarded Good to Excellent for their energy efficiency rating by the National Environment Agency.

The Fab fridge has appeared on both the small and big screens! In 2011, it was featured in the movie *Transformers: Dark of the Moon.* The fridges are also on the set of the popular BBC baking programme, *The Great British Bake Off.*



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CHEAT SHEET: HOW TO TALK ABOUT ART



"Between the complicated language of 'artspeak' and the fact that most gallery staff seem to be better dressed than you. art galleries can be intimidating places to enter," says Daniel Ord (left), founder of The Art Club Singapore, a gallery that holds educational events. But don't worry - he offers tips on how to appreciate art and engage in conversation on this seemingly highbrow subject.

How to start

Observe the art at a gallery or museum, before selecting an appealing one. Describe what you see - the subject, size, texture, colours, symmetry (or lack of). Verbalising helps you get better at describing accurately and objectively, so you can talk intelligently and confidently about how a piece makes you feel, or what it makes you think about.

The discovery process

"It's okay to like only certain things at first, as it's natural to respond to what feels familiar," says Daniel. After all, very few people have encyclopaedic knowledge of art and art criticism. Even the tastes of gallerists and artists evolve over time. So attend as many art events as you can, to gain exposure and practise articulating what you see!

A deeper understanding

The process of studying an artwork provokes questions, such as "Why is everyone dressed except the lady in the middle?" or "What's the meaning of a can of Campbell's Soup?" Often, you have to first understand the context - factors that include when and where the work was created and the social or economic conditions at the time. It is this context and meaning, rather than superficial aspects, of the work that brings it to life.



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ART AT THE ART CLUB SINGAPORE, 530A GEYLANG ROAD, TEL: 9838-2353 WWW THEARTCLUBSINGAPORE COM OR WWW.FB.COM/THEARTCLUBSINGAPORE.



DANIEL APPLIES HIS TIPS. USING THE MASTERPIECE "THE MAN WITH TWO GLASSES" (OIL ON BELGIAN CANVAS) BY GERMAN REALISM ARTIST DIETMAR GROSS.

Step 1: Identify and describe what you see

- This appears to be a scene from this man's regular daily life.
- The artist's focus is very much on the man's face, his beautiful soft leather jacket and his hands - both of which hold an empty glass.
- The man's eyes are closed.
- The colours used are muted and complementary.
- The background is dark and tells us very little about where the man is or what he is doing.
- The style is highly realistic with a strong sense of reflected light shining on the man's face and leather jacket.

Step 2: Analyse what you are thinking and feeling

- What do you think the man is thinking about?
- Why is he holding two glasses and why are they both empty?
- How do you feel when you look at this painting?

Step 3: Cross-examine with the context

- Dietmar Gross was directly inspired by Spanish artist Diego Velazquez's 1620 painting, "The Water Seller Of Seville". What are the similarities?
- Velazguez was fascinated with painting scenes of everyday life in Seville, where he lived. This differed from the more traditional depiction of the aristocracy and religion in art.
- In this painting, Velazguez depicts the old man who is working as a lowly water seller on the streets of Seville - with a majesty and dignity that was not normally given to depictions of the lower class.



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Celebrity Blogger's house (by Icon Interior Pte Ltd)









See more of the cafe's fun bicyclethemed interiors, only in our digital edition. See page 14.







SOEK SENG 1954

Soek Seng 1954 might be in a far-flung location, but despite its quiet surroundings, the cafe is bursting with personality and life – through its vibrant interiors, and when the dinner crowd rolls in.

Owner Poon Kng Joo is a well-known bike and art enthusiast, as well as an avid cyclist, who knew that the odd location would be a hit among cyclists on the weekends. As such, he decorated the space with vintage bicycles of various brands and designs, all of which he meticulously restored. "In fact, this is only a small selection from my entire collection of reinstated bikes," he reveals.

The cafe is almost like Kng Joo's personal canvas, complete with his handmade art installations made out of bicycle parts, quirky doodles on the tables, and chalk drawings on the cafe's exteriors.

Sitting beside an airstrip for private jets, the eatery also has a fabulous, unobstructed view – that of the vast sky. "That's why this place is also such a hit among families," Kng Joo says. "The kids love seeing planes take off and land."

As for food, local delights such as seafood *hor fun* (\$5.50), and Western dishes such as chicken chop (\$8.50) and sirloin steak (\$10.50), make for an affordable treat.



A B O V E Several mini installations made by Kng Joo, such as this one made out of bicycle bells, adorn the walls of the cafe.

ABOVE, LEFT Corrugated zinc panels were used to enhance the aesthetic of the cafe's exteriors, and fit the theme of the airfield.

A B O V E, FAR LEFT More of Kng Joo's bicycle collection are showcased on top of the vintage theatre-themed display above the counter.

LEFT Images of renowned cyclists, art pieces and Kng Joo's bicycle restoration works are displayed all over the cafe.





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LEKKER ARCHITECTS

A SINGAPORE-BASED, **MULTIDISCIPLINARY DESIGN PRACTICE RUN BY A HUSBAND-**AND-WIFE DUO

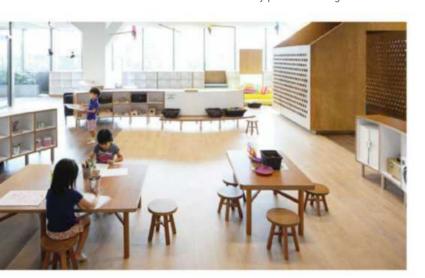
Lekker Architects – comprising architect Ong Ker-Shing, and design consultant Joshua Comaroff – is the sole Singapore representative among the six Rising Asian Talents of 2016 announced recently by Maison & Objet (M&O) Asia. Having met almost 20 years ago, the couple have a wide portfolio that ranges from building and landscape, to furniture and interiors. They have developed an interest in design for children - since the birth of their two kids - as they believe design is key to enhancing the development of creative and analytical thought from an early age.

How do you approach projects which involve designing for children?

We try to create projects that allow children to "take ownership". We feel that a key part of creative thinking is the idea that individuals can change the world, even in small ways. In most of our works, we create settings which can be rearranged and reinterpreted by children; we aim to be "flexible" to their needs.

How is it different from designing homes?

Residential projects are challenging because they are highly specific. Homes are incredibly personal things. The







View more of Lekker Architects' works, only in our digital edition. See page 14.

TAP FOR GALLERY





TNP The couple were commissioned to convert a private cemetery into a public park in Nanjing, China. The result is a series of simple and modern pavilions built into a landscape of forest and lawn.

ABOVE Lekker Architects' designs for public seating at the National Gallery Singapore feature a contemporary spin on replicas of the original furniture used at City Hall and the Supreme Court.

LEFT Their design of the Cove 2 preschool at Ngee Ann Polytechnic supports kids development, learning and inclusive play.

difficulty is in tailoring design that fits well, yet remains flexible for change and growth.

What does good design mean to you?

Good design is not just about meeting a list of functional requirements. What's important is that it communicates emotion and makes you feel things that you don't experience in the normal course of your day. In this way, it connects physical things to our senses.

What are some of your upcoming works?

We are excited for the opening of Kindle Garden, an inclusive school in Redhill where special-needs children are educated alongside mainstream pupils. A first in Singapore, we learnt about designing for children who suffer from hypersensitivity, vision impairment and require physical therapy. We're also looking forward to the opening of Playbox, an art space for young people at the Esplanade.



VISIT WWW.LEKKER.SG.

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Watch a video to find out more about Hans, and view a walk-through of 'The Alchemists', only on our digital edition. See page 14.





HANS TAN

THE AWARDWINNING 36-YEAROLD INDUSTRIAL
DESIGNER BAGGED
THE PRESTIGIOUS
PRESIDENT'S
DESIGN AWARD
IN 2015, FOR THE
POUR TABLE, WHICH
WAS RECENTLY
SHOWCASED AT
THE ALCHEMISTS'
EXHIBITION.



What drew you to the world of design?

I chanced upon a new course at the National University of Singapore – Industrial Design – involving design, marketing and engineering. Thinking it was quite an interesting mix of expertise, I took the plunge after national service. I realised I was good at making things. That was a surprise for me and there's been no turning back since!

Tell us about the concept behind the Pour table.

What inspired me was the painstaking process of making *kueh lapis sagu* (a multicoloured layered Nonya cake), which involves steaming each layer before pouring the next one. I experimented with resin and used additives to achieve a viscosity such that it doesn't run when poured on an open surface. To create the tabletop – without a mould – the resin composite in various colours is poured in succession on a flat surface, layer upon layer, like the *kueh*!

What was the biggest challenge when using this technique?

Timing is critical in the process of working with resin. Between pouring the blobs of coloured resin on top of each other, we had to wait for the material to harden to

A B O V E
"What I like about
design is the
experimentation
with making,
materials, and
processes – I'm
quite a hands-on
person," says
designer Hans Tan.

RIGHT The resin composite used to create the surface of the Pour table "has a high surface tension and holds itself like a puddle of water", the designer says. This allows individual coloured blobs of the material to be poured on top of each other in succession to create the unique effect.

LEFT
The Pour table
is composed of
an epoxy resin
tabletop, made
without a mould
on an open, flat
surface, and a
powder-coated
steel base. It looks
light, but weighs
about 15kq!

just the right consistency; a bit like that of a gel. The window period we have is about 20 to 30 seconds. If we are too late, it hardens and will be quite brittle, but if we are too early, the colours will mix. Sometimes, we have to discard a whole piece! So, a lot of calculation, preparation and control are required to make each table. It's actually a lot like baking!

You have quite a diverse portfolio. Do you have a favourite type of project?

I'm more interested in materials and concepts than mediums. My ideas for projects stem from working with materials and understanding them. I like to come up with ideas that subvert how the material normally behaves, by designing a new process to subject the material to.

Any advice for budding designers?

First, learn because you need the knowledge. Then, start bending the rules. If you learn to bend them well, break the rules!



THE POUR TABLE IS AVAILABLE AT INDUSTRY+, 1A TYRWHITT ROAD, TEL: 6337-1370. VISIT WWW.INDUSTRYPLUS.COM.SG.







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Fertile Imagination

The creator of amazing glass lighting installations, Czech company Lasvit has brought the fantastic imagination of its new collaborators – the Campana Brothers - to life. Designed by the brothers, the Candy collection of lamps was inspired by the colourful sweets sold in Brazil markets, while the Fungo chandelier (pictured) was created in the guise of mushrooms that grew on an ancient wooden glassmaking mould in the basement of Lasvit's glassworks. due to humidity.





THE CARAFE TABLE IS AVAILABLE IN THREE COLOUR VARIATIONS, AND TWO SIZES, STARTING AT \$4,979 FOR THE SMALLER ONE. IT IS AVAILABLE AT XTRA, #02-01 PARK MALL, TEL: 6336-4664.

Function Meets Style

It is said that the dining table is one of the most used furniture pieces in any home, as it is where most of us eat and work! The Carafe table from Herman Miller combines these two functions to create a table that can be both a work desk and a dining table. The table has plenty of storage options, such as a broad drawer which slides out from either side of the table, which can store cutlery or cables, and a built-in cantilevered shelf at either end.







Stunning Stone

Besides using alabaster as your flooring or on your countertops, the material is now available in lamps. A new range of alabaster lighting pieces from Taylor B. Fine Design Group, which include table lamps and chandeliers, show off the delicate beauty of the material. The Art Deco-influenced designs will bring a touch of contemporary elegance to any space.



TAYLOR B. FINE DESIGN GROUP IS AT 43 KEPPEL ROAD, TEL: 9420-4000 AND 9420-4040, WWW.TAYLORBDESIGN.COM.





Quality Shower

Hansgrohe's new Rainmaker Select overhead showers have a white glass rimless surface which provides a cleaner and more luxurious look. The range of showerheads comes with three spray modes, a 46cm spray disc – with more than 200 openings cut out using a precision laser – and a Rain Stream function that activates water jets for massages. For a sleek and minimalist look, thermostats can be concealed behind the wall!



FIND THE RAINMAKER SELECT OVERHEAD SHOWERS AT THE HANSGROHE SHOWROOM, 69 MOHAMED SULTAN ROAD, TEL: 6884-5060.

Brand New Sound

The UB+ Eupho Brave speakers work great together, or on their own. As a single module, it is slim and compact enough to serve as a convenient portable Bluetooth speaker. At home, you can connect a number of them to create an effective soundbar for the TV set. The Eupho Brave speakers also look stylish and classy, available in evergreen hues such as grey and black.



THE EUPHO BRAVE SPEAKERS ARE AVAILABLE AT \$598 FOR A SET OF SIX FROM WWW.UB-PLUS.COM.





Built Memories

Supported by the iRememberSG Fund of the Singapore Memory Project, Architecture and the Architect: Image-making in Singapore documents the fast-changing built landscape in Singapore, through featuring 40 buildings in a diversity of styles, including shopping malls, offices, institutional spaces, public housing and private residential developments. It includes a variety of voices, including those of architects, residents, tenants, shopkeepers and security officers, of the featured buildings.



ARCHITECTURE AND THE ARCHITECT: IMAGE-MAKING IN SINGAPORE (\$50) IS STOCKED AT DECK, BASHEER GRAPHIC BOOKS, OBJECTIFS, AND GALLERY & CO. VISIT HTTP://DONOTDESIGN.COM/#/ARCHITECTUREANDTHEARCHITECT.



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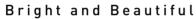
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Natural State

After it is processed, wood looks very different from the trees they came from. Italian design atelier Alcarol wants to preserve the surface and feel of timber in its raw state, through its furniture pieces. For instance, the Undergrowth collection is made out of recovered Italian Dolomite logs which still have moss and other primitive organisms on them, frozen in resin.

ALCAROL IS AVAILABLE AT DREAM, 456 RIVER VALLEY ROAD. TEL: 6235-0220.



The elegant Lighthouse Lamp by Christopher Jenner is made of crystal, which can be easily moulded to showcase form and texture, and reflect light well. The aim of its design was to produce the most amount of light while using as little energy as possible. The light from the five-watt LED bulb is reflected and refracted by the hand-cut crystal that surrounds it, creating a bright and warm glow.





Musical Magic

Fancy a grand piano to complete your living room, but don't play the instrument? The Steinway Spirio is an amazing player piano which can also play on its own! It comes with a complimentary iPad, allowing you to select the pieces you want the piano to play, using the Steinway Spirio app, with results comparable to that of a live performance. Now, you can listen to "world-class pianists" in the comfort of your own living room.

-

THE STEINWAY SPIRIO IS PRICED AT \$183,000 FOR THE LIVING ROOM GRAND MODEL, AND \$218,000 FOR THE MUSIC ROOM GRAND MODEL, AVAILABLE AT THE STEINWAY GALLERY, #01-01A PALAIS RENAISSANCE MALL, TEL: 6838-0525.

DIARY



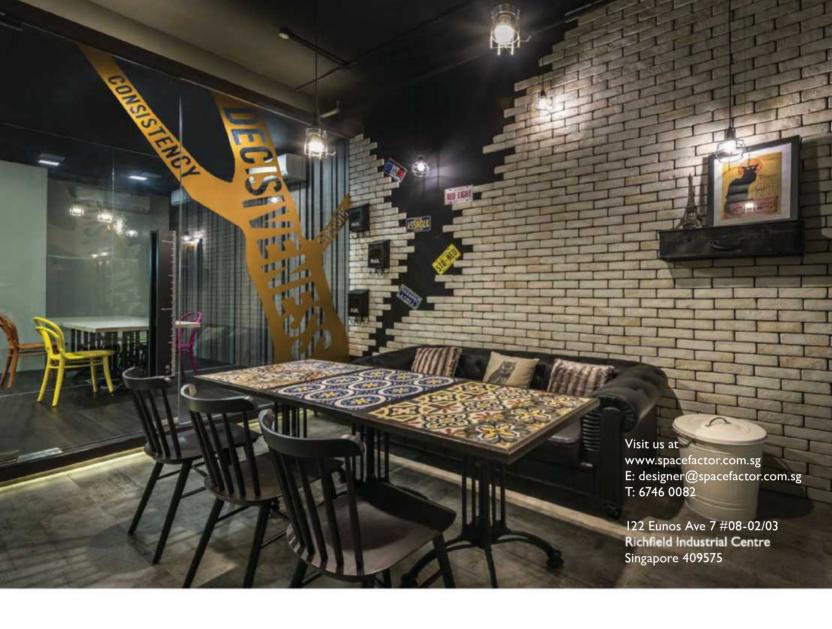
Boutique Fair 2016 March 11 to 12, #02-01 to #02-03, F1 Pit Building

The longest-running boutique shopping event is back for its 29th edition! The fair will be housing familiar homeware names such as Deer Industries, Styledeco, Make Room (pictured) and more. It will also carry fashion and accessories from local and international brands. While shopping, grab light bites and drinks from the Cedele Group, Workspace Espresso Bar and Pop Up Wine.

Unseen: Constellations March 19 to April 17 at Objectifs, 155 Middle Road.

The Unseen: Constellations installation hopes to connect sighted people and those with visual impairment through art. For this, artist Alecia Neo worked with seven youths living with visual impairment to showcase their self-exploration. Experience seven tents, each offering a different multisensory experience – from music, to audio story and film – and step into the youths' creative

journeys. Admission is free.





We understand your space

About the Curves

This queen-size bed frame from Entune Living is part of the Frame collection and designed by Mario Mazzer. Together with the other furniture pieces in the range, such as racks and dressers, it features soft, subtle curves. The simple design, however, does not compromise on sturdiness. The bed is made durable with North American white oak, which also gives it a warm and homely look.

THE FRAME QUEEN-SIZE BED FRAME IS AVAILABLE FOR \$2,400 FROM OM, LEVEL 8, 16 TAI SENG STREET, TEL: 6235-0777.





Wood Be Nice

New Copenhagen-based brand Wood Be Nice offers handcrafted living accessories made of natural and smoked oak. Its first collection of furnishings for the hallway, which includes a flexible clothes rack and wall-mounted storage boxes, features simple and clean-looking Scandinavianstyle aesthetics.

ORDER WOOD BE NICE PRODUCTS FROM WWW.CRATENORDIC.COM/ MAKERS/WOODBENICE, WHICH SHIPS TO SINGAPORE







Simple Scandi

Finnish brand Marimekko's latest Spring Summer collection of prints use simple lines and basic shapes to convey a timeless style that is effortlessly chic. Among them is the Tiiliskivi (brick) pattern (pictured, far left), which was designed by Marimekko's founder Armi Ratia. If you like nature, there's also the bold Tiara print of plants and flowers, created using watercolour.

MARIMEKKO IS AT #02-17/18 CAPITOL PIAZZA, TEL: 6834-4802.



Game On

Spice up your parties by including one (or all) of District Eight Design's game tables in your home! The newly introduced poker table, ping-pong table and mahjong table, made of reclaimed hardwood, solid oak and cast iron. all feature the rugged industrial aesthetics the Vietnam-based brand is known for. The pingpong table even has custom bats made of timber and leather. The Game range includes an existing foosball table and a chess set.

THE NEW GAME TABLES RETAIL FROM \$3,838 FOR A MAHJONG TABLE, AND ARE AVAILABLE ON ORDER EXCLUSIVELY FROM JOURNEY EAST AT #03-02 TAN BOON LIAT BUILDING, TEL: 6473-1693.





OUR PICKS

Beanbags







1 Soopadoopa beanbag, \$229, from Doob. **2** Beads sofa, \$169, from Muji. **3** Dionysus Arctic beanbag, \$269, from Hipvan.

A Smart Experience

Watch your favourite flicks and Youtube videos in 3-D on Reference, Loewe's latest high-end Smart TV. You won't miss a single detail with its vibrant, natural-looking images, and integrated stereo soundbar. Available in 55-, 75- and 85- inch screens, it features a quality aluminium frame and a rotating floor stand.



LOEWE REFERENCE RETAILS FROM \$8,999 AND IS AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING AT THE ATLAS SHOWROOM, 10 WINSTEDT ROAD, #01-18 BLOCK D, TEL: 6334-9320.

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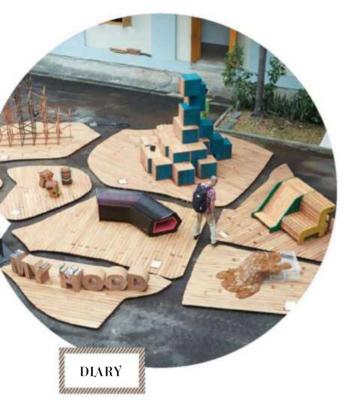
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Design thatfils your lifestyle



SINGAPORE DESIGN WEEK 2016

In SDW's third edition, which takes place from March 8 to 20 around the island, design enthusiasts can look forward to over 100 events, from large-scale exhibitions such as the International Furniture Fair Singapore and Maison & Objet Asia, to workshops, and crowd favorites such as Design Trails. We've picked out some events we're definitely going to catch! Log on to www.designsingapore.org for all the details.

Maison & Objet Asia 2016

March 8 to 11 at Marina
Bay Sands Expo and
Convention Centre,
admission charges apply
Budding designers, furniture
collectors, interior design
enthusiasts – all are welcome
at this esteemed trade fair.
Feast your eyes on stunning
furnishing collections, and
keep up with lifestyle trends.
Visit www.maison-objet.com/
en/asia for more details.

Design and Make Fair

March 8 to 20 at National Design Centre, free admission

New at Design Week, the Design and Make Fair aims to educate the public on the basics of design with hands-on activities such as making products using everyday things. Participants will have the opportunity to experience what it is like being a designer, and learn creative thought processes.



Design Trails: Thoughtful Design

March 19 to 20, 11am to 5.30pm, free admission In this third instalment of Design Trails, participants will travel via a free shuttle bus to a curated line-up of places, such as the studios of designers. This behind-the-scenes experience will start at National Design Centre, and include stops such as the Fictive Fingers Headquarters, Detention

Singaplural 2016

March 7 to 13 at 99 Beach

Barracks at Joo Chiat Place, and

Floral Magic.

Road, admission charges apply Organised by the Singapore Furniture Industries Council. Singaplural returns for its fifth edition with the theme "Senses the art and science of experience". Don't miss A Blend Of Senses by Kim Choy, in collaboration with Shibui Furniture Collective. Expect an interactive session where you'll saw, shave and chop wood pieces, and learn to appreciate wood patterns, grain direction and the growth of the tree. **Engulf by Celine** Ng, a project with Xtra and Bolon, is an installation which highlights the weave on the "scale" tiles from Bolon's 'Flow' collection, which echoes the grace and movement of breaking waves. Journey by M!lk Inc. in collaboration with Admira, is a display installation which comprises a series of individual wheels in different colours and forms which visitors can spin. For more details, visit www.singaplural.com.



President's Design Award 2006 - 2015, A Decade of Design Excellence

March 9 to April 8 at National Design Centre, free admission

At this celebratory 10th anniversary exhibition, visitors have the chance to marvel at the works of all 125 recipients of the President's Design Award. Familiarise yourself with the names of leading designers who have created products, as well as places, that have left an impact on the community and everyday life.



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Now you can get more from *Home & Decor* – and it's absolutely free! We're ramping up our digital offerings, starting with this month's digital booklet, *Your Q&A Guide to Renovations and More!* In this free download, you'll find what you always wanted to know about home renovations, materials, decor and maintenance, presented in an easy question-and-answer format.

The questions featured have been cherry-picked for their relevance to most homeowners; and we wanted to give our readers the solutions they need in one handy booklet that's accessible anytime and anywhere on tablets or smart devices.

Your Q&A Guide to Renovations and More! comes with the March issue of the digital edition of Home & Decor, but can also be downloaded separately from the App Store, Google Play or Magzter. Check back on these platforms soon, as we'll be pushing out more exclusive digital publications this year.

We would love to hear what topics you would like for future digital booklets – e-mail your suggestions to maghomedecor@sph.com.sg!

FURNITURE TO LOVE

Unique design and details set Luca Nichetto's furniture for De La Espada apart from the rest.

If you like furniture that is unique, versatile and crafted with premium materials, consider designs by Luca Nichetto for De La Espada. The Italian designer uses colour palettes inspired by nature, and craft techniques from a range of disciplines including fashion, carpentry and fine art. Whether you've got a Scandinavian or Mid-Century Modern-style home, the pieces in Nichetto Studio's range will fit perfectly!



The minimalist and stylish Blanche Bergere reading chair comprises overlapping upholstered shells, which create a wrap-around form to offer the user a sense of privacy. A quirky design piece, the Laurel coffee table is composed of two geometric shapes – a cone and a cylinder – to create two surfaces at different levels. Marvel at how the cone appears to balance on the cylindrical base!

The "skeleton" of the Elysia lounge chair, traditionally hidden inside the upholstery, is deliberately exposed to showcase the craftsmanship and premium timber used!

Nichetto's Stanley sofa has an exposed solid wood frame, which reveals the expert woodwork of the joinery. The taut backrest upholstery and the deep back cushions offer not just style, but also comfort.

See the full range of furniture designed by Luca Nichetto for De La Espada at the Dream showroom at 456 River Valley Road, tel: 6235-0220, or www.dream.com.sg.



THE DAILY GRIND

The cold hard metal of stationery makes for shiny machinery on the factory floor.



FROM LEFT

Suck UK Clockwork **pencil sharpener**, \$42.90, from The Wright Gift. Silver stainless twist **timer**, \$19.95, from Crate & Barrel. EL Casco chrome black **perforator**, \$203, from The Wright Gift.

OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT
Small glass dome, \$21 and vintage white cake plate, \$18.30, both from Robinsons.
Tall crystal candleholder and Xtra-small crystal candleholder, prices upon request, both from Taylor B Lighting Gallery. Yellow cake stand, \$21.90, and Bead pastel pink cake stand, \$45, both from Robinsons.

HUSTLE AND BUSTLE

The monolithic forms of kitchenware become edgy architecture – it's much like being in the Central Business District.







FROM LEFT
Chrome-plated salt and pepper shakers, \$32.95 for a set of two, and
Beehive glass honey jar with wooden dipper, \$14.95, both from Crate & Barrel.
Cocoa shaker by Tala, \$22.50; sugar shaker by Tala, \$22.50, and
DOR golden salt and pepper shakers, \$40 for a set of two, all from Robinsons.

OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT
Lighthouse pepper mill, \$99.95, from Crate & Barrel.
Baker standard flour shaker by Rayware, \$18, and Cooks dry measuring cup by Tala, \$25.50, both from Robinsons. Car 60 white and blue containers, \$59 for a set of two, from The Wright Gift.





View our traveller snaps of this superstylish hotel, only in our digital edition. See page 14.



Nothing in the La Maison Champs Elysees in Paris is what you would expect from a five-star hotel. The reception counter in the lobby is a monolithic dark tinted mirrored structure, the rooms are either all-white or all-black, and the legs of the furniture in the restaurant seem to levitate. But that's not all that surprising, coming from the avant garde fashion house of Maison Martin Margiela, the architect of the hotel's spaces.

The firm, named after the Belgian designer who founded it, is known for its unconventional deconstructed fashion designs and partiality to white cotton; and the only hotel it has designed brings this visual identity strongly through to its spaces. La Maison Champs Elysees is owned by private investment group ODO, and was reopened in 2011 after a year of renovation.

You will notice there are no flowers in the hotel, and no paintings on its walls. This is so guests can focus on the design of the space, says a hotel spokesman. Instead, the





establishment works with artists once a year to create installations that anchor its public spaces. When we visited last year, the works of French artist Frederique Morrel took centre stage in the lobby and restaurant. The designer created fascinating, charmingly bizarre installations using her signature material of vintage tapestries, some wrapped over moulds of taxidermied animals.

Housing 57 guest rooms in two buildings – a Hausmann-era townhouse once owned by French royalty in the mid 19th century, and a contemporary extension built in 1989 – the hotel reflects its mashup of old and new, traditional and modern, in more than its contrasting architecture. There is the great staircase with its gilded First Empire eagle watching over the tinted mirror parallelepiped in the lobby and, in the rooms, classical wall mouldings that are randomly truncated.

With its monochrome interiors, it might seem strange to say that the hotel is a visual delight, but it is. Panel doors along the corridor outside the restaurant sport wallcoverings which give a trompe l'oeil effect, and the trickery is further enhanced by a row of real chandeliers which also appear in printed form. The carpet underfoot gets in on the deception as it looks like timber strips. In the restaurant, "levitating" chairs and tables owe the successful illusion to white cotton covers and dim lighting.

Located along the quiet but exclusive street of 8 rue Jean Goujon in the golden triangle of Paris (which borders the famous shopping streets of the city), the hotel is just a five-to-10-minute walk away from Champs Elysees, and walking distance to major city landmarks such as the Grand Palais, the Arc De Triomphe, the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower along the river Seine.

Even if guests are not

impressed by the reputation

of the design firm or by the

conceptual, artistic touches,

of its location, and the size of

its rooms.

they will be awed by the centrality

The spokesman also tells us that the rooms are huge, for the same price you might pay in other five-star establishments situated in the golden triangle. Here, the smallest room is about 240sqf, junior suites (which fit two to three people) are 380sqf, with suites going up to about 590sqf. Devotees of design should choose one of the 17 suites in the hotel's Couture Collection, which each sport a different design concept.

But despite the achingly hip coolness of it all, we're still glad to note something standard on our stay – luxurious contemporary comfort provided with goose down duvets, linen sheets and Macintosh computers in every room.

Find out more about the hotel at www.lamaisonchampselysees.com.





- **3** The hotel, originally a townhouse built for a French duchess, was constructed in 1866.
- 4 The work of artist Frederique Morrel, such as this intriguing installation of vintage tapestries in the hotel lobby, was featured in the hotel last year.
- **5** One of the 17 Couture Collection rooms in the hotel is this all-white Lost Mouldings Suite.
- **6** A gilded First Empire eagle guards the great staircase of the hotel.
- **7** A futuristiclooking mirrored parallelepiped (a structure whose surfaces are all parallelograms) houses the hotel's reception counter.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

You probably have more seats than any other piece of furniture – from sofas to loungers, armchairs to dining chairs and stools. Seats help set the style for a space, and here, we show you your options, plus how to tell a chesterfield from a cabriole, and a wing-back from a Windsor!













Types of sofas



CHESTERFIELD

Known for its quilted style, this 19th-century English design is traditionally upholstered in deep brown or tan leather, and features rolled arms, a deep seat and wooden feet. Often associated with old-school drawing rooms and libraries, it has a "preppy" look.



LAWSON

This has a distinctive backrest comprised of removable pillows separate from the sofa frame, and arms that are lower than the back. It's usually upholstered in fabric and layered with large cushions.



TUXEDO

With ties to Modernism and the 1920s, this style is defined by a frame with arms and back of equal height. It cuts a low rectilinear profile, with elegant proportions.



CABRIOLE

Characterised by an often ornately carved, continuous rounded frame, and upholstered in luxurious fabrics, this style became popular during the 18th century.



SECTIONAL

A multi-piece modular sofa that can be configured, but two common ones are L-shape and U-shape. It combines separate units, including armless seats, corner units, ottomans and chaise units.









5 Moroso Saula

Marina lounger,

\$14,379,

from Xtra.

- **6** Lema Yard daybed, \$10,040, from W. Atelier.
- 7 Lucano Tatum Master chair (adjustable backrest and headrest), price upon request, from Star Furniture.







- **5** Caracole Black Beauty chair, \$1,549, from Taylor B.
- **6** Oliver B Onda chair, \$2,999, from Harvey Norman.
- **7** Challenge chair, \$3,110, from Grafunkt.
- **8** Vitra Monopod chair, from \$3,255, from Space.

Types of chairs



WING-BACK

A distinctive accent chair, it features a typically high back, winged sides and a generous scale. The protective "wings" were originally designed to shield its occupant from draughts and heat from the fireplace.



CLUB

This armchair gets its name from the fashionable 1850s' English gentleman's clubs where it was often used. It is usually heavily upholstered, and has arms as high as its back.



SLIPPER

This type of chair was used in ladies' bedrooms and dressing rooms. It is identified by its low height, narrow width and high back – it may have a shape resembling that of a shoe, but its name supposedly comes from its ideal proportions for sitting on to put on footwear!



WINDSOR

This traditional chair features a back that is bowed or hooped, with multiple thin, turned spindles attached to a solid seat, as well as spindle legs that splay outwards.



71



What to know

HEIGHT

Bar stools and counter stools have a crucial difference - bar counters are higher than standard kitchen counters, so the seat height of bar stools should be 70cm to 85cm, while that of counter stools should be 60cm to 68cm. Or, choose an adjustable model.

FOOTREST

This is important for comfort - you should be able to rest your legs on them, and not have them dangling.

BASE DESIGN

Either a pedestal base, usually in metal, or a stool with legs.

BACK DESIGN

Backless - these allow you to sit and turn in any direction. Low-back - these have a contemporary look that is almost backless, but have some support. High-back - these are the most comfortable with full support, but tend to be heavier in look and weight.



- 2 Caracole In Stitches high stool, \$1,319, from Taylor B.
- **3** Madam Stoltz stool in black and natural, \$139. from Make Room.
- **4** De La Espada Commune stool, \$1,621, from Dream.



STOOLS



OUR RANGE OF PRODUCTS. AND INSPIRING THE DESIGN OF NEW ONES.



The Greenlam Catalogue isn't just a compilation of our range of beautifully crafted laminates. It is a tool to provide inspiration and ignite possibilities. Possibilities that can come to life using the contents of this catalogue.

So, if you're looking for inspiration, ask for your copy of the latest **Greenlam Catalogue**.



SAVE MORE

A gas clothes dryer promises more savings as compared to an electric model.



A City Gas gas clothes dryer offers over 40* per cent more savings on utilities bills as compared to regular electric dryers. In Singapore's tropical climate, rainfall and humidity levels are high all year round. Consider using a clothes dryer for your laundry; you'll no longer have to worry about your clothes being subjected to harsh sunlight, rain, pollution or bird droppings! If you're concerned that your energy bills will increase, try a clothes dryer that is powered by gas instead of electricity. Gas clothes dryers, such as the City Gas Rinnai RD-600CG, consume less energy as compared to electric clothes dryers, resulting in lower energy bills (see table). As such, the City Gas Rinnai RD-600CG is an essential appliance

for busy homemakers and working professionals.

The Japanese-designed gas clothes dryer can dry different fabric types with its computerised programmes. A built-in microchip sensor constantly monitors the humidity level to prevent the clothes from overdrying, so clothes always turn out soft, fluffy and with fewer wrinkles.

Compact in size, the dryer fits easily in small laundry or yard spaces, and promises a clean and hygienic drying process which kills most dust mites and harmful micro-organisms.



GAS VS ELECTRIC CLOTHES DRYER		
Item	Gas Clothes Dryer (RD-600CG)	Typical Electric Dryer
Heat Input	4.65kWh	3.6kWh
Drying Capacity	6kg	6kg
Drying Time	60 mins	120 mins
Running Cost*	\$41.76 per year	\$70.32 per year
Savings*	40 per cent	

^{*} Based on usage of four times per month and subjected to tariff revision.

To find out more about the City Gas Rinnai RD-600CG gas clothes dryer, visit City Gas Gallery at PWC Building, Level 2, 8 Cross Street, or visit www.citygas.com.sg.



GAS IS BETTER



City Gas water heaters emit 63% less carbon emissions and are more environmentally friendly for your home.



Designed with built-in safety features and tested to EN26 standard by TUV SUD PSB Singapore.



Switch to City Gas water heaters and

save on water heating utilities!

A family of four using a gas water heater may reduce energy costs compared to electric instantaneous and storage water heaters*.

Comparing Gas Water Heater to:	Annual Energy Cost Savings
Electric Instantaneous Water Heater	- \$30
Electric Storage Water Heater	~\$100

- * Energy study conducted by Dr Lee Siew Eang, NUS.
- *Based on a 2014 study by ZEB Technology Pte Ltd for public agencies in Singapore.

Coming Soon

City Gas Gallery Sale - March 2016 Look out for more information at www.citygas.com.sgl

Bring along this voucher to City Gas Gallery @ PWC Building to enjoy \$20 off your purchase and receive a City Gas goody bag!

Terms & Conditions apply.



Масго MA-10FE Gas Water Heater

Rinnai RD-600CG Gas Clothes Dryer



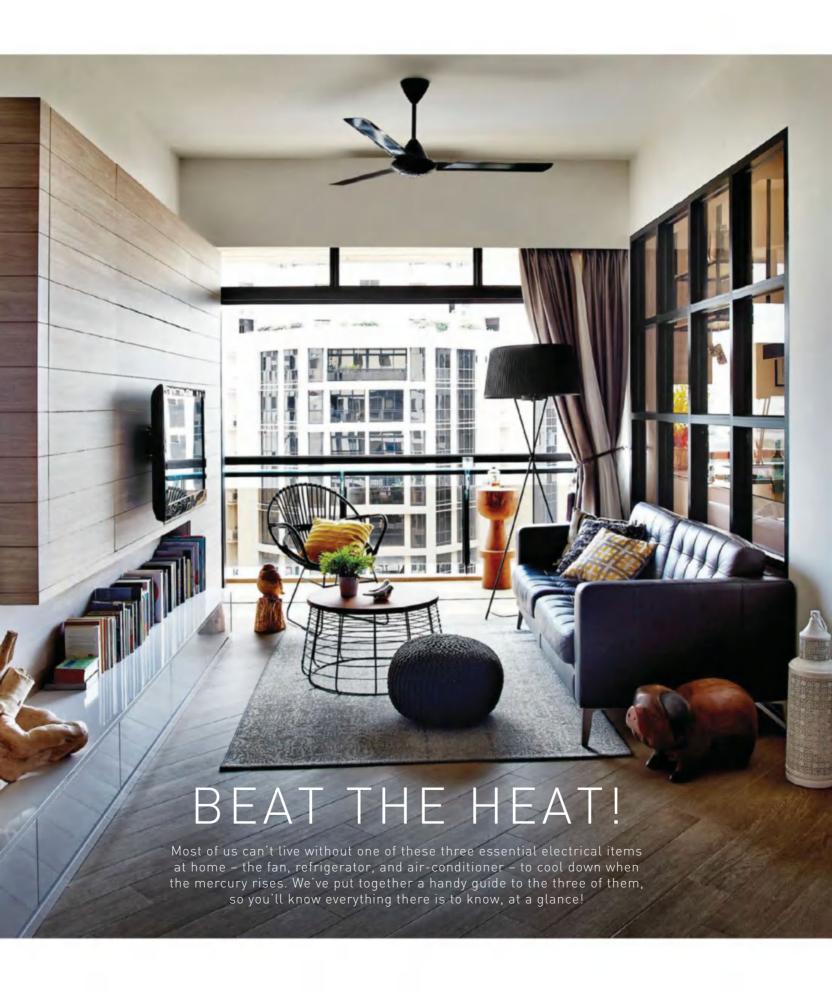
Aerogaz AZ-720FT Gas Hob with Timer Control

Features:

- · Gas supply will be cut off and an alarm will sound once your pre-set timing is up.
- · A flame failure device will cut off the gas supply for safety if the flame accidentally goes out.
- · Available in elegant black, tempered glass or brushed stainless steel.

Safety Tip: Do not leave the gas hob unattended at all times.

Terms & Conditions: Original voucher is to be presented prior to payment and for one time use only. Photocopied voucher will not be accepted. No partial redemption allowed and no refund will be given. Voucher is not valid in conjunction with other discounts and promotions. Voucher is not replaceable. City Gas will not be responsible for any loss, damage, tear or defacement of the voucher. Voucher is not exchangeable for cash. Each customer is entitled to use only one voucher per transaction. Voucher is not valid as settlement for custstanding appment to City Gas Voucher is strictly valid for purchases made at City Gas Gallery @ PWC Building only. Terms and conditions are subject to change by City Gas and such changes shall take immediate effect without prior notice. Valid until 31" March 2016,



FANS

HOW THEY WORK

Fans circulate air, and efficiently distribute it throughout a space. As the blades rotate, air is circulated in a direction which pushes cool air down and hot air up – or vice versa, depending on the blades' direction. Therefore, they don't so much lower the ambient temperature as they do create a cooling effect, by drawing heat away from the skin.



KNOW THESE TERMS

Downrod – For a ceiling fan to work efficiently, the height between the fan and floor should not be too distant. So, homes with high ceilings will need a downrod to lower the fan while keeping it stable. Homes with low ceilings, will need a hugger installation – this keeps the fan as close to the ceiling as possible.

Ceiling type – Know the surface you'll be installing the fan on. A false ceiling usually requires reinforcement to strengthen the mounting spot.

Measurements – Don't just consider the measurements of the fan itself. Buyers need to know the size of the room to determine the number, size and angle of the fan's blades. For instance, flat blades generate wind within the fan diameter, whereas a blade with a steeper angle covers a wider area.

Direct Current Motor (DC) -

This is a bi-directional motor which is light, compact, and energy-efficient. The Alternating Current Motor (AC), on the other

hand, is uni-directional, heavier in weight, and consumes more energy.

Temperature sensor -

This is technology which monitors the surrounding temperature, and automatically adjusts the speed of the fan to suit it best. The sensor helps save energy.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

- Cleaning fan blades by sliding each one within a pillowcase promises mess-free results. For blades made of organic material such as bamboo, such as those on Haiku fans, do not use water or cleaning liquids as this will result in mould growth.
- If your fan is noisy or wobbly, it is due to incorrect installation. Contact experienced installers and professional cleaning experts to fix the problem.
- Consider buying a new fan when your fan blades start drooping. This typically happens to fans with blades made of thin metal sheets.

Information provided by Capital
Distributors, Big Ass Fans, and Spin.

OUR PICKS



SAVANNAH BY SPIN

Savannah features acrylic blades in a walnut grain finish – it's stylish and easy to maintain, as acrylic blades do not rust when exposed to sunlight or rain. It is equipped with Spin's trademarked Ultra Dynamics DC, which promises to save electricity by 80 per cent.

Get them from Spin, #05-01, 994 Bendemeer Road. Tel: 6298-1038.



T60AW BY KDK

The T60AW is designed for HDB flats or apartments with low ceilings less than 3m high. It is also equipped with the 1/f Yuragi function, which creates a wind flow that mimics a natural breeze.

T60AW is available at KDK stores.

Visit www.kdk.sg for store locations.



BLACK MATRIX COMPOSITE BY HAIKU

If you're looking for the strong and silent type, opt for this Haiku model. Its blades are made of a durable glass matrix composite and, like every Haiku fan, it has been tested to ensure the quietest operation.

Check out Haiku fans at the Big Ass Fans warehouse, #06-07, 18 Tampines Industrial Crescent. Tel: 6709-8500.





Get ideas on how to conceal your aircon unit, only on our digital edition. See page 14.



HOW THEY WORK

The aircon extracts heat from indoor air and expels it outdoors, using three main parts; a compressor, a condenser and an evaporator. Hot indoor air passes through the evaporator coil, which is filled with a heat-absorbing chemical called the refrigerant. The fan blows the cooled air into the room. In the compressor, the heated refrigerant (now a gas) is compressed into liquid form again, making it ready for another round of heat extraction. The heat generated by the compression is then blown outdoors via condenser coils and another fan.



KNOW THESE TERMS

Indoor/outdoor units - Indoor units are the physical aircon units themselves, which house the fan and evaporator coil. The outdoor unit, often called the compressor, works outside the home.

Systems 2 to 5 - Think of systems like a package - if you purchase a System 4, you'll be paying for four aircon units (indoor units) and one compressor (outdoor unit). Pick the system according to how many rooms you want cooled. For example, to cool three bedrooms and one living room, pick System 4.

Inverter aircons – Inverter aircons are equipped with a compressor which operates at a range of speeds, from slow to fast, to meet the selected temperature. This means the aircon cools only what is needed and is more energy-efficient, compared to conventional units which operate at only one speed. The latter overworks the aircon and wastes energy.

R410A - Aircons use chemicals called refrigerants to effectively cool the room. R410A is a type of refrigerant, which is more eco-friendly and efficient compared to the previously popular refrigerant, R22.

Cooling capacity - This refers to how much cooling load is

required for a particular room or area, and is measured by the British Thermal Unit (BTU). An aircon with 9,000 BTU per hour is sufficient for a standard HDB master bedroom.

To prevent a hefty bill, choose the right BTU for each room so you can keep cool without overworking your aircon. You can also install blinds or window films to prevent sunlight from heating the room.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

- Common problems include aircons that leak or do not produce cool air efficiently. A leaking vent means the temperature is too cold (causing condensation), so turn up the temperature or increase the fan speed. Leaking on the unit itself might mean the drainage is blocked, and requires servicing.
- The easiest way to improve the output of cool air is to clean the filters! Dirty filters also force the aircon unit to use more energy and can shorten its lifespan. Soak the filter in soapy water for five to 10 minutes, gently rinse and let it dry. Replace the filter if dirt can no longer be washed or brushed off, or if it has holes.

Information provided by LG Electronics, Johnson Controls, Ambi Labs, and Daikin Air-Conditioning. 2

OUR PICKS



ARTCOOL BY IG

This energy-efficient and silent aircon features the H1N1 filter, which has been proven to eradicate 99.9 per cent of the virus within 24 hours. In addition, smartphone users can use the Artcool Premium Smart Service app to request non-on-site support from LG aircon technicians

The new LG Artcool Platinum series is available from selected Courts, Gain City, and Harvey Norman stores.



SILVER ENVI BY DAIKIN

Silver Envi's inverter system comes with a two-area intelligent eye, a sensor which switches to energy-saving mode when the room is unoccupied for more than 20 minutes, as well as a 3-D air flow system, which distributes the air evenly throughout the room. The curved front panel design is also a stylish element. Silver Envi is available at Daikin Proshops

Visit www.daikin.com.sg for store locations.



GRANDE BY YORK

Awarded a four-tick energy efficiency rating by the National Environment Agency (NEA), the Grande inverter aircon comes with built-in negative ionisers for the removal of dust and smoke. To prevent the growth of mould and bacteria, it uses a self-cleaning function which dries out the coil when the unit is switched off. Visit www.johnsoncontrols.sg for store locations.



AMBI CLIMATE BY AMBI LABS

Ambi Climate is a smart add-on gadget for remote-controlled air conditioners, and it works through a phone app. With sensors that monitor aircon performance and your environment - such as humidity levels and outdoor weather - Ambi Climate can alleviate energy-wasting problems such as overcooling, and control your aircon unit while you're overseas. Ambi Climate is available at Challenger stores.



REFRIGERATORS

HOW THEY WORK

Much like how an aircon works, cooling in a refrigerator involves compressing the gaseous refrigerant, and pushing it out to the condenser coils outside of the fridge, where it becomes a liquid when it meets the cool air of the kitchen. This then flows into the evaporator coils inside the freezer and fridge, absorbing the heat and cooling the air. The refrigerant evaporates into a gas again, flows back to the compressor, and the cycle begins again.

OUR PICKS



ELECTRIC TOUCH SYSTEM BY ELECTROLUX

It's important to keep different types of food at their ideal temperatures, and with a touch of a button on models with this system, you can adjust the temperature for individual compartments – whether it's for a quick freeze, or vacation mode.

Electrolux refrigerators with this system are available at all major home electronics stores.



DOOR-IN-DOOR SERIES BY LG

LG's door-in-door series allows users to reach for their food and snacks without having to open the main refrigerator compartment. This feature provides a smarter way of organising your food, and prevents too much cold air from escaping, allowing food inside to be kept fresher for longer.

LG Door-in-Door refrigerators are available at Courts, Gain City, Harvey Norman, and other LG authorised retailers.



WMX410BT/SS BY WHIRLPOOL

This refrigerator's fruit crisper comes with Micro Block technology, which releases antimicrobial additives to disrupt and prevent up to 99.9 per cent of bacterial growth. It is also equipped with Fresh Flow flexi-vents, with antibacterial filters that ensure the air in your fridge remains clean and fresh.

WMX410BT/SS by Whirlpool is available at APS Lifestyle Gallery, 9 Muthuraman Chetty Road. Tel: 6233-0593.



KNOW THESE TERMS

No Frost – The cool air circulation eliminates moisture from freezer and refrigerator compartments, preventing the accumulation of frost on food, as well as ice on interior walls. It also keeps power consumption low.

Inverter technology - Like in aircons, the inverter technology changes the operation rate of the compressor to allow less energy consumption.

Ideal temperature – Each type of food requires a different temperature. For produce, it is 4 to 7 deg C; eggs, 3 to 4 deg C; dairy, 2 to 4 deg C; meat and poultry, 0 to 1 deg C; and fish and shellfish, –1 to 1 deg C.

Refrigerator types -

Top-mounts feature the freezer on top, which may vary in size, from a small compartment to a 50-50 split.

Bottom-mounts have freezers at the bottom, which are usually equipped with pull-out drawers. Typically more expensive than top-mounts, these have a larger refrigeration portion.

Side-by-sides offer organised storage and shelves for both

refrigerator and freezer sections. **French-doors**, by definition, have a side-by-side top with a bottom freezer. It lets you see most foods, shelves, and crisper drawers, at eye level. However, there is a lack of organised storage space.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

- Remember to clean the back and bottom of the fridge regularly. Use a dry towel for the exterior, and a soft towel, neutral detergent, and clean water for the interior. Do not splash water directly on the refrigerator, or on any light and electrical panels.
- Spilled oil or seasoning? Clean it immediately as set stains may crack the plastic shelves. Banana oil, alcohol and soap powder may also damage the plastic components.
- Consider replacing your refrigerator if the cost of repair is half the price of a new model. It is also more economical to get rid of your 20-year-old fridge even if it is running well! for a newer, more energy-saving machine.

Information provided by Electrolux South-east Asia, LG Electronics, and Whirlpool South-east Asia.

QUALITY CUSTOMISATION

Customise a premium leather sofa that's unique to your needs, preferences and personality!









For quality furniture at affordable prices, check out Fullhouse Home Furnishing and its subsidiary brand, Divano Boutique Studio.

The shop's popular products include its range of sofas made with top grain cowhide leather from Mastrotto Italia. Fullhouse and Divano let you customise their sofas with functions such as electronic or battery-operated reclining systems, as well as storage boxes and sliding seats. Fitted with double-coiled heat-treated stainless steel seat springs, the sofas are durable and the seats do not sink.

Customers can even choose to have multiple hues – including purple, green, yellow, orange and red, in addition to darker shades such as grey, brown and black – on a single sofa; and customise the colour of the stitching, too! The colours do not fade easily, and will add personality to any home. The modular design of the sofas also make them versatile enough to fit into all spaces.

The sofas come with a five-year warranty for their surfaces, mechanisms, frame, internal seat spring and stitching.





Visit the Fullhouse Home Furnishing showroom at #02-74, 114 Aljunied Avenue 2 (tel: 6844-8122), and Divano Boutique Studio showroom at 51 Sims Avenue (tel: 6745-2933). Visit www.divano.com.sg.

We are bringing *Home & Decor*Shop-Hop back! Join us for an exclusive shopping trip and learn more about decorating your home, furniture, household appliances, and more.







EVENT DETAILS*

date

April 23, 2016 (Saturday)

registration fee

\$20 per person

[Fee is redeemable against a Home & Decor print-edition subscription]

HIGHLIGHTS

- Door gifts at every stop
- Exclusive deals and discounts at every stop
- Attractive lucky draw prizes
- Decor tips and advice

Organiser



For more information and to register, visit www.homeanddecor.com.sg/promotions

*SPH Magazines reserves the right to amend event details.

Partners



homestolife

TERMS AND CONDITIONS • Priority will be given to participants aged 21 years old and above. • Registration is on a first-come first-served basis and is subjected to availability. • Registration form must be completed with payment details. • Participants will receive a reminder email with more details of the shopping trip, latest by April 20, 2016. • Registration fee is non-refundable and is fully redeemable against a Home & Decor print-edition subscription. More details will be provided on the event day. • SPH Magazines Pte Ltd reserves the right to change the terms and conditions without prior notice. • SPH Magazines and the partners will not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by you during the event. • Photographs and videos may be taken at the event for use in event publicity, promotional materials and other related materials by SPH, its related corporations and its service providers. • SPH Magazines reserves the right to qualify the definitions of the terms and conditions, and shall not be held responsible for any misinterpretation of the above-mentioned terms whatsoever. • By providing the information set out in the registration form and submitting the same to SPH Magazines, you confirm that you have read, understood and consent to the terms of this event and also to the collection, use or disclosure of any personal data by SPH Magazines for the purposes of your event registration, in accordance with its Data Protection Policy available at www.sphmagazines.com.sg. • For enquiries, please email maghomedecor_promo@sph.com.sg.

HOMES QF CREATIVES



Do you wonder what the homes of people in the creative industries look like? Would they be unusual, unique, outstanding? Everyone has their own idea of what "home" is, and this vision is different for a local film-maker, a creative communicator, an interior designer, and an architect-to-be, whose homes are featured in this section. Turn the page and get to know them through their personal spaces!



RUN THE SHOW

Royston envisioned his apartment as a blank canvas that allows him to change his environment whenever he likes — very much like living on a film set!



WHO

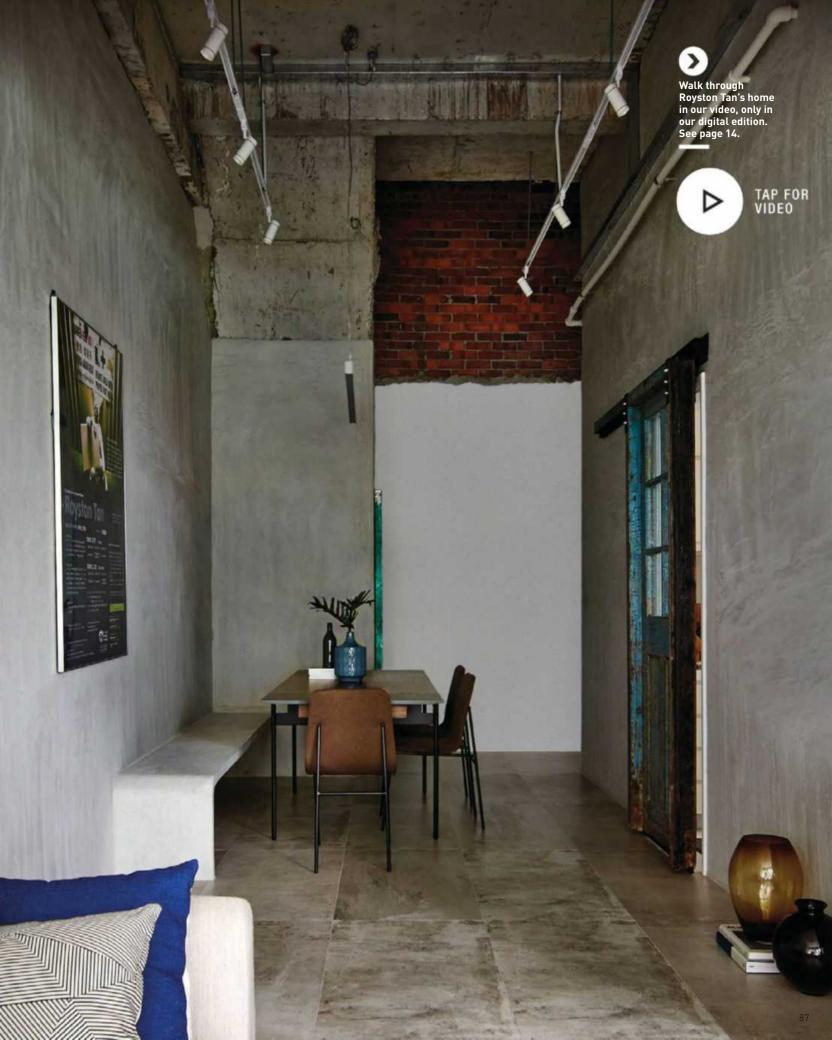
Royston Tan, local film-maker.

Royston Tan – known for his art cinema feature and short films, such as *Sons*, *Mother*, *881* and *15* – is one of Singapore's most promising young film-makers. The 39 year-old is a graduate from Temasek Polytechnic, and has to his name over 60 international and local film awards. With a huge cult following around the world, his films have been shown in the US, Europe and Asia.

SIZE 1,337sqf HOME

Double-storey two-plus one-bedroom condominium unit in Serangoon







RIGHT
The only built-in
fixture installed in
the whole home is
a concrete bench
for the dining area
– a practical design
feature that makes
the most of the
space's narrow
width and location.
Accessories
on table from
Commune.

RIGHT. RELOW A weather-beaten door, originally from Shandong, China, was installed along sliding tracks to close off the kitchen. Royston first spotted this statement piece at a boutique in Orchard Central When the shop closed down, he tracked the owner down to acquire the door!

OPPOSITE The beauty parlour signboard was given to Royston by the owner of Xin Cai Hong Hair Salon, which had been around since the 1960s. As a student at Zhonghua Secondary School, Royston used to walk by every day, and ended up filming his documentary, Old Romances, there three years ago. Tableware, cushions and throw, from

"The nature of my work involves working with lots of props, and I'm used to being able to move loose furniture around so the look can always change," says film-maker Royston Tan, on his home's design. To this end, interior designer Raymond Seow of Free Space Intent gave the apartment a "clean, industrial-zen look", with concrete screed-finished walls and floors, and minimal built-in fixtures.

This uncluttered, bare structural canvas allows Royston to have free play in styling the place with his huge collection of vintage furniture and decor pieces – two huge storage rental rooms' worth! "My friends say I'm a hoarder! So I have to do justice to every single piece I've collected, and rotate them in the space," he says.

He has been collecting vintage pieces since he was just 17. "I grew up in the 1980s in a kampung, among furniture you can no longer find now. Singapore is moving too quickly and I see the need to hold on to bits and pieces of the charming past," he continues.

From gadgets such as a 1961 Sony transistor radio and rotary dial phones, to furniture and accessories like the retro TV and record player console, old-school Formica chairs and the framed mirror with Chinese characters from the 1960s, Royston collects them all, but has one requirement – "Everything has to be in working condition!"

To match his vintage "props", basic furniture pieces, such as an extendable dining table, sofa, bed and desk, all with a "retro-modern" look, from furniture shop Commune were selected. As for artwork to dress up the walls, there is nothing more apt than posters of Royston's own films, plus some commissioned paintings.

WHERE TO GO

Free Space Intent, TEL: 6392-8885









A B 0 V E
The two chairs
placed in the
entrance foyer
came from seats
that Royston
managed to
salvage from
the old Capitol
Theatre. The rest
of the seats have
become part of
a permanent
film installation
at the Singapore
Art Museum!
The lamp is from
Commune.

LEFT
Part of the living area, the open study is situated in the footprint of a former bedroom. A framed mirror Royston bought in Taiwan hangs above a desk with pencil legs from Commune, while collectibles and colourful toys are stowed in the vintage wooden cabinet behind.

O P P O S I T E
A commissioned painting by local artist Elton Goh adds contrasting colour to the hallway. It is an artwork that has been painted over numerous times, at different milestones of Royston's life.





LEFT
Looking upwards to
the "ceiling" of the
home, the change in
wall finishes reveals
where the false
ceiling was originally
installed. The
designer removed
it to expose the roo
structure beyond;
you can now see the
brickwork, concrete
beams, cable trays
and ducting –
a bold move!

[O P P O S I T E] T O P Posters of films directed by Royston accompany the assortment of vintage decor and retro accessories throughout the apartment.

B O T T O M Located on the mezzanine, the master bedroom is furnished with just the essentials – a bed with an upholstered headboard and wooden nightstands from Commune. Understated concrete screed-finished walls and floors, as well as an exposed high ceiling, form the backdrop for film-maker Royston's collection of vintage "props" — furnishings he switches around every now and then to change the apartment's look.







DISPLAY OF AFFECTION

This personality-imbued home has been designed such that almost every wall is utilised to showcase the homeowners' fascinating collection of objects!



S I Z E **1,001sqf**

WHO Leon Lai, the co-founder of creative communications agency GOVT.

With a background in communications and having worked in the advertising industry for seven years, Leon co-founded GOVT in 2012. Fuelled with a passion to create work that is locally and culturally relevant, the 31 year-old has produced campaigns for the likes of Airbnb, Nestle, DBS, Absolut Vodka and Haagen-Dazs. The award-winning GOVT is also a curator for Singaplural 2016, a showcase of local design that is part of Singapore Design Week.

HOME

Four-room Built-To-Order HDB flat in Tiong Bahru









For Leon Lai and his wife, Meryl Ho, their pop culture collectibles mean so much to them that they were willing to sacrifice two of the three bedrooms in their new flat, for a more spacious layout that best shows off their treasured objects. They engaged designers Wong Zihao and Liew Guofeng of Studio Super Safari, who "designed a home not just for the couple, but for all their things, too!"

In fact, Leon had brought the designers to his storage-rental facility prior to the design process, so they knew exactly what they were dealing with. "I'm a hoarder by nature!" laughs Leon, who has amassed a variety of vintage furniture, sneakers – over 50 pairs of them – Absolut vodka bottles and retro Singapore Telecom rotary dial phones, among other things, over the years. Zihao and Guofeng ended up building display shelves over every possible wall of the home to house everything the couple wanted to showcase!

For Leon's large collection of shoes, the designers constructed an L-shape display that leads from the foyer to the living room. Finished in a light wood-tone laminate from Lamitak, it has a striking geometric



T O P In between the dining area and openconcept kitchen, a glass-and-teak wood cabinet showcases an array of old Singapore Telecom rotary dial payphones and home phones.

R I G H T Leon bought this 1930s Burmese teak wood U-leg sideboard from a vintage dealer in Kallang, and had it restored. The tricycle was bought in Bali five years ago – the first vintage item the couple got together.

O P P O S I T E In the foyer, chairs salvaged from the old Capitol Theatre provide the homeowners with special seating arrangements when wearing shoes!





LEFT
Linking the
dining and living
areas is a feature
wall designed
using teak wood.
Leon chose the
material, as he
appreciates that
it was commonly
used to make
furniture in
the past.

(OPPOSITE)
TOP
The design of the feature wall, with Indonesian teak pieces laid in a chevron pattern, is a "playful interpretation" of the shoe storage's faceted design.

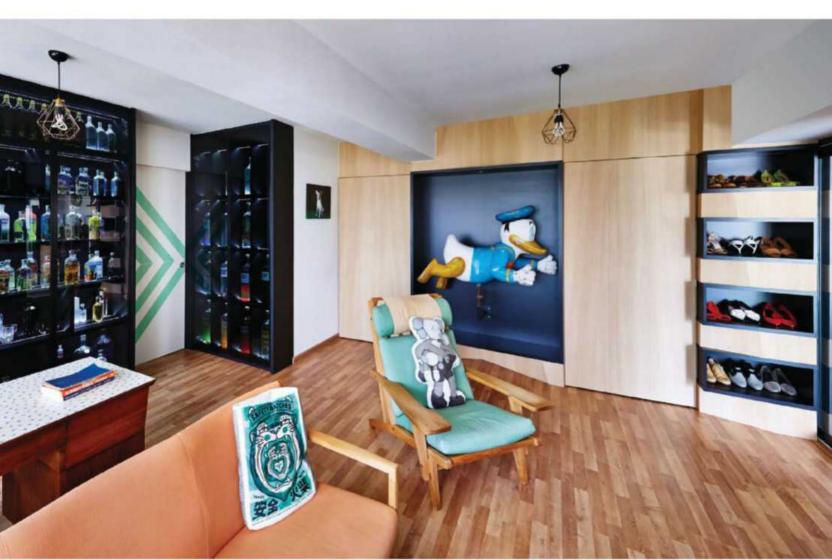
BOTTOM
Two bedrooms
were sacrificed
for a larger living
area to show
off the couple's
collections. Simple
and functional
storage allows
Leon's Absolut
Vodka bottles to
take centre stage.





form with rows of linear "cut-outs" to place the colourful sneakers. Besides concealing the access to the bomb shelter and common bathroom, the structure was also designed to accommodate a large Donald Duck "sculpture" (actually the seat of an amusement park carousel ride) that the couple acquired in Bangkok. "Since it's rare for a guy to take up way more space for his shoes than his wife, this Donald Duck display is for Meryl!" says Leon, regarding his wife's fondness for the cartoon character.

Alongside the spacious dining room is a visually arresting feature wall created with Indonesian teak pieces laid in a chevron pattern, against which a black steel-frame open shelving is hung. On display is an assortment of their favourite items, such as old food tins, incense bottles from Japanese cult brand









Neighborhood, and a working vintage radio. The solid wood finishing continues on the reverse side of the wall, segueing into the adjacent living room.

In place of what used to be two bedrooms, the open-concept living and study area features Leon's prized collection of Absolut Vodka bottles, including limited editions. Arranged in a backlit tinted-glass-and-timber display, the bottles glow softly and take on an artistic quality. "I actually have over 300 bottles, but there are only about 100 here!" says the homeowner, who started collecting them when he was in university.

The furniture peppering the home is a mix of vintage pieces; Leon says his love for vintage furniture was cultivated during the years he spent growing up in his Grandma's home. Besides local finds, he also has an Einar Larsen sofa and a Hans Wegner armchair – Danish pieces bought from Noden Collective. Seeing as every nook and cranny is put to good use, the renovation – which cost about \$90,000 – provided Leon and Meryl with a stylish canvas to curate and present their cherished possessions.

WHERE TO GO

Studio Super Safari, TEL: 9144-4837

RIGHT
The master
bathroom features
cool blue mosaic
tiles and has a
concrete screed
finish, for a
utilitarian look.

A B O V E
The amusement
park carousel
ride seat (in the
form of Donald
Duck) between
the concealed
common bathroom
and bomb shelter
is a focal point of
the living room.

OPPOSITE
The bedroom is
fitted out with
built-in cabinetry
separating the
sleeping and
dressing areas.
Above the bed is a
window grille that
was salvaged from
an old house and
spray-painted to
look new.





ROOM FOR EVERYTHING

This interior designer's home features several looks in various rooms, all unified by colour.



SIZE **2,400sqf**

WHO

Sarah Tham, design director of design consultancy firm Cube Associate Design.

Sarah wasted no time at all, establishing her firm – and her name in the industry – just a year after she graduated from Nanyang Academy of Fine Art's interior design programme. The bold decision paid off, and she now helms a team of five that has clinched top awards such as *Home & Decor*'s Home of the Year in 2000 and the Design Excellence Awards' Distinction trophy in 2003. Sarah believes that good interior design is multidisciplinary – "a designer should be a good art director, as well as an artist!"

НОМЕ

Four-bedroom condominium apartment





B E L O W Sarah went for a chic, monochromatic theme – from the photographs to the rug – in the holding room.

OPPOSITE
Walls were knocked
down to merge the
two living rooms.
This also improved
natural ventilation.







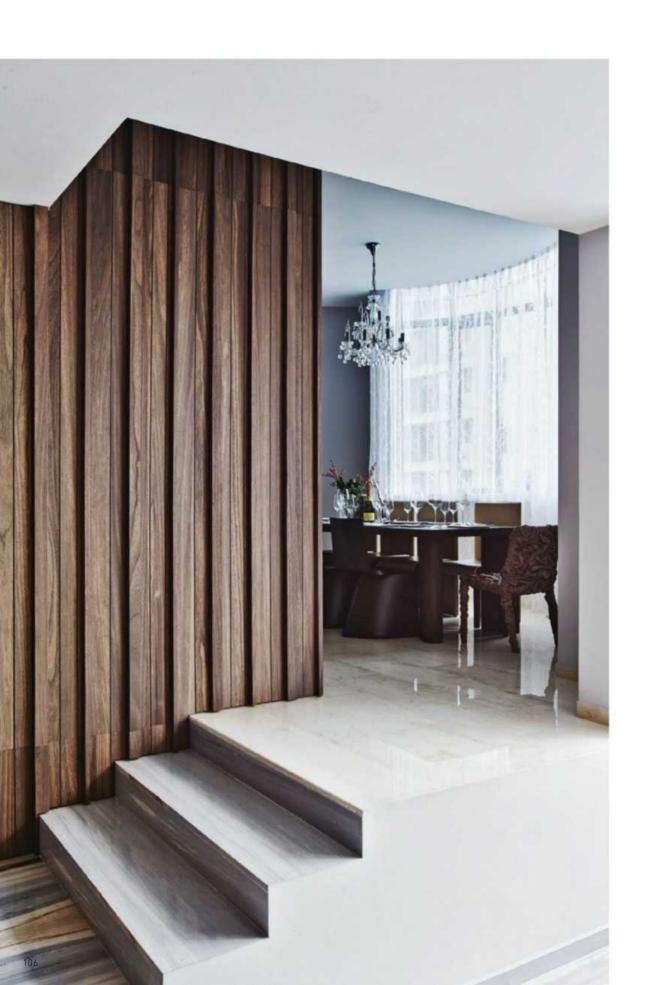
However, knowing what mood she wanted each room to have helped narrow down her options. The living room was designed to evoke a casual atmosphere, whereas the dining area is styled elegantly. And while the holding room channels a Manhattanchic flair, Sarah's bedroom is a minimalist, fuss-free space. We find out more about the home's \$300,000 renovation (excluding furnishings), and how she achieved its final look.

What is your design style?

I am not one for matching furniture, as it looks too serious. I prefer loose furniture that I can play around with. For instance, I like that my raw, wooden study table from Bali clashes with the contemporary Cassina armchair. I also love to experiment with textures, using fabric or paint, such as with the blue Stucco texture paint for one of my walls.

Each room has a different look. How did you pull this off?

You must have an element that ties it all together. I chose grey for my main colour theme, from the high gloss spray paint on the walls to the veneers in the bathroom. I also chose the same textured wood veneer for my hidden storage spaces, which are fitted to my living room, study, and kitchen walls; this gives the interiors a sense of unity. Once you have that, you can mix and match styles in the rooms.





Tell us about the unique marble flooring in the living room.

When I first saw the Blue Paracento Italian marble two years ago, I knew I wanted it for my home's flooring. I love marble, and the blue-grey streaks make this a rare find; it is like a large painting and instantly draws your attention! As I had a limited time to renovate, I had no choice but to use it exclusively for the living room and pair it with the original cream marble floor – luckily, the split level demarcates both areas naturally.

Apart from hidden storage, what were the main changes made during renovation?

The apartment is large, and came with two living rooms. However, this made the ventilation poor and there was a lack of natural light. I had to knock down quite a few walls to let the light in. I also made the second living room smaller to accommodate one of my must-haves – a spacious bathroom!

I spend a lot of time in the bathroom, so it is important that I have everything within reach. To combine my walk-inwardrobe and vanity table with the shower and bathtub area, I enlarged the space by extending it into the original corridor.

In designing a home, what makes all the difference?

Lighting, as it changes the mood instantly. I think a house should look different throughout the day; bright and airy in daytime, and cosy at night. This explains the strip ambient lighting underneath my staircases, as well as the various lamps throughout my home.

WHERE TO GO

Cube Association Design, TEL: 6538-8918

A B O V E
The designer decided to take down a kitchen wall and split the space into two areas, a dry kitchen (where the countertop and dining area are) and a wet one.

OPPOSITE Although the house is large, it did not come with designated storage spaces. Therefore, Sarah had hidden storage fitted against the walls.





RIGHT
A spacious
bathroom with a
walk-in wardrobe
was a must, and
special attention
was given to
ventilating the
space well. To
the right is the
master bedroom,
which features
blue-grey hues.

(OPPOSITE) TOP As an art lover, Sarah leaves most of her walls to paintings. She encourages clients to personalise their space this way, too.

BOTTOM Sarah's definition of a well-designed powder room is one that should be distinct from the rest of the house. "It should be unexpected, and make guests go, 'wow'," she quips.





BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Featuring a design concept that separates its public and private spaces, this home is allowed to be "messy" – as long as the mess is kept out of sight!



MHO

Amoz Boon, architectural assistant.

With a master's degree in architecture – which he obtained in Australia – under his belt, Amoz is in the process of getting certified as an architect in Singapore. Having recently moved back to Singapore, he is currently working at EHKA Studio, a local interior design and architectural firm.

S I Z E 1,180sqf номе

Five-room Built-To-Order HDB flat in Choa Chu Kang







Amoz Boon began working on the design of his new home when he and his wife, Eleanor Ee, were still living in Gold Coast, Australia. The couple are both in their late 20s. Being both the designer and homeowner, he knew exactly what the desired look was – "something spacious, sophisticated and easy to clean" was Eleanor's requirement, he says. To achieve this, he designed the layout of the flat so that the public and private spaces were separated, and spent over \$70,000 for the renovation.

Black aluminium-framed glass panels, as well as the sheer curtains behind them, zone off the private areas, namely the study and bedrooms. "This area behind is allowed to be 'messy' since it's hidden!" laughs Amoz. The couple frequently have friends over, and things can be quickly and discreetly stashed away behind the glass panels, he explains. The study has also been designed according to the concept of a studio – with a large communal, centrally positioned workspace – which the couple can share (Eleanor is a tuition teacher).

The living area on the other side is neat and structured with an almost symmetrical layout. The furniture has also been arranged unconventionally for this type of flat: The TV set is mounted between

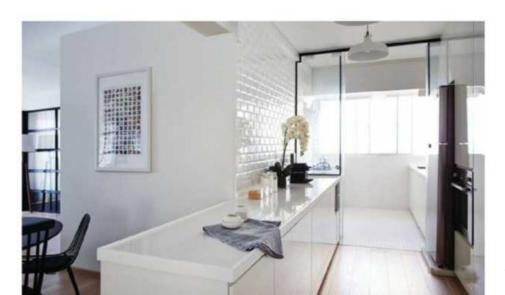




A B 0 V E A geometric arrangement of photographs taken by the couple form a focal point in the living area. Candle plates on coffee table, from stylodeco.com.

ABOVE, RIGHT Structures in the home, such as the aluminiumframed glass door and the panel concealing the bomb shelter, are kept black and inconspicuous so as not to steal the limelight from the furniture.

RIGHT
Walls were demolished
to open up the kitchen,
which has a gallery
layout with a bright and
airy feel. Tableware and
linen towel, both from
stylodeco.com.







RIGHT
The master
bedroom has a
calm and restful
vibe, kept free
of clutter and
ornamentation.
Vases, from
stylodeco.com.

LEFT, BELOW Sheer curtains flanking the wallmounted TV in the living room block out the glare, but not the light.

LEFT, BOTTOM Aluminiumframed glass panels, installed between the living room and study, demarcate the private and public areas of the home.

BOTTOM Black fittings, fixtures and accessories provide marked contrast against the otherwise all-white master bathroom. Basket and bath towel, both from stylodeco.com.







the windows, with the seating area orientated towards it. But for this to happen, a false wall had to be built to cover part of an existing window.

Between the living area and the open kitchen is the dining area, which is Amoz's favourite part of the home. Each dining chair around the round table is different. "Guests can pick their own unique chair to sit on," smiles the designer. The couple also agree that it is interesting to observe the choices of different guests.

Amoz wanted the furniture to be the main feature in the home, "like sculptures decorating the place," he says. Therefore, almost every piece was bought from a different store, such as Grafunkt, Commune, Lush Lush, Muji, Comfort Design, Ikea, Castlery and Picket & Rail. When it came to the wall decorations, they did not want to buy posters or prints. They simply decided to use the photographs they took while travelling the world over the past two years: it was not just a stylish choice, but a personal one, too.





HOME GROUND

Material textures and a mix of personal knick-knacks give this industrial-style space a welcoming atmosphere.

W H O
A couple and their
young child

H O M E Three-bedroom HUDC flat in Serangoon

> S I Z E 1,650sqf

> > LEFT
> > Sebastian bought
> > this Lorong 22
> > Geylang sign
> > online. "I've been
> > told it is weird to
> > have, because of
> > the association
> > with the red light
> > district. But it is
> > a quirky touch!"
> > he quips.



When Sebastian Gehlfuss and his wife found out they were expecting, they decided to move back to Singapore and into the 28-year-old HUDC flat in Serangoon belonging to the wife's parents – after all, nothing is more comforting than familiar grounds. "My in-laws were happy for us to buy over their flat, as they found a more elderly-friendly one nearby," says Sebastian.

The couple had lived in London for a few years, where they fell in love with the aesthetics of the old wharf warehouse their apartment was in. To recreate the feel of that abode here, they brought back some beloved furnishings, such as a cowskin rug bought at a London street market and their matrimonial bed.

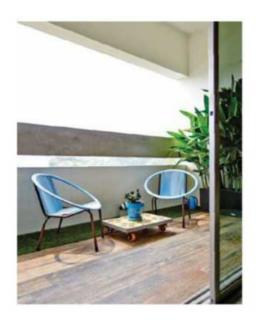
They also worked with interior firm Box.ID to incorporate industrial elements into their new home; the concrete floor and exposed electrical trunking



A B 0 V E As the couple had a good idea of the design they wanted, the designer says his role was more to advise on the spatial layout of the home.

RIGHT The designer describes the style of the apartment as semi-industrial with rustic accents.









FLOOR PLAN



throughout the flat was a must, as well as a reddish, raw brick wall in the living room. Sideboards and shoe cabinets were also fashioned out of concrete with mesh wire doors, in a renovation that cost \$48,000, excluding furnishings.

The couple also had one rule for the design: It had to feel like home; and they achieved that largely by decorating the walls with family photographs. "We take a lot of photos, and buy nice frames. We knew we had to have a photo wall," says Sebastian.

The cold, industrial look was balanced with warmer tones. For instance, they chose a walnut wood-look laminate for their kitchen cabinetry and dining table, and a dark brown leather sofa. The Haiku fan in cocoa bamboo, colourful dining chairs, and Peranakan tiles on the kitchen floor play a part in creating a welcoming, lived-in atmosphere as well.

When asked what his favourite part of the house is, Sebastian says: "Definitely the large living area. It keeps the family together, even if I am eating dinner at the kitchen island while my wife plays with our son in the living room."

WHERE TO GO

Box.ID, TEL: 6341-7105

[ABOVE] RIGHT The couple displays their collection of quirky items throughout the flat, including this retro local payphone.

MIDDLE
The mesh wire
doors of this
concrete sideboard
are inspired by
the industrial area
in London where
Sebastian and
his wife lived.

LEFT In the balcony, the leftover Peranakan tiles were used to make a mini table on wheels.

[O P P O S I T E] T O P The designer tore down the walls of the previously enclosed kitchen to accommodate a large island.

B OTTO M For some colour, the designer suggested a green subwaytiled backsplash and Peranakan floor tiles for the kitchen.







LEFT
As "having the same six chairs are a bit dull",
Sebastian opted for mismatched dining chairs which he bought from several shops.

"We like modern furniture, but also furniture with oriental influences and an old-world element to them," says Sebastian.

ADVERTISEMENT

Comfort in familiarity

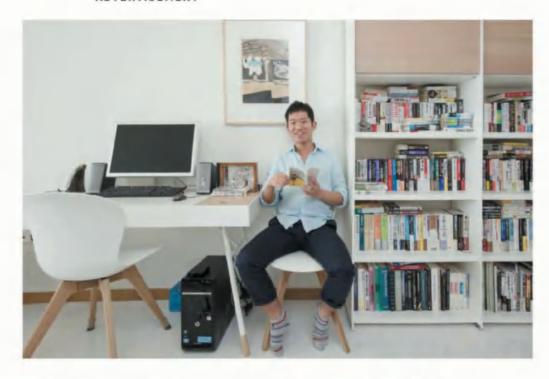
Settling in Singapore after living in Tokyo for many years yet still being able to choose the same line of furniture as his home in Tokyo provided a sense of familiarity to Mitsuya Nakata.

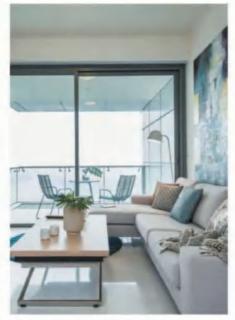
WHO

Mitsuya Nakata, a bachelor in his early 30s

HOME

One-bedroom condominium at Beach Road





TOP

Mr Nakata needed a book shelf to house his extensive book collection. BoConcept interior decorator, Cheryl recommended a white Meda book shelf to fit all his books to avoid leaving a cluttered and heavy look.

LEFT

"Cool and Intelligent" was what Mr Nakata wanted to exude in his home. As requested, a cool palette was chosen by adding touches of colours such as blue, green and grey, as seen from the artwork to his cushions and accessories.

Cheryl Koh Interior decorator at BoConcept Paragon



FAVOURITE PIECE OF BOCONCEPT FURNITURE:

The Carmo sofa. I love the cubistic and clean look it can provide to a space and the extra detail such as the piping along the edges of the sofa. Personally, I love objects that are clean, cool, and simple for the home.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY:

To create comfortable and joyful homes for my clients.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

I am Inspired first by everything around me, my travel journeys and nature. Working for BoConcept, I have met many home owners with different personalities and cultures and that further inspires me to create and style each home as a cozy retreat from the hustle and bustle of life.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR JOB?

I feel an immerse satisfaction to be able to turn my clients' dream home into reality and to see the joy and satisfaction on their faces.







NEW LEASE OF LIFE

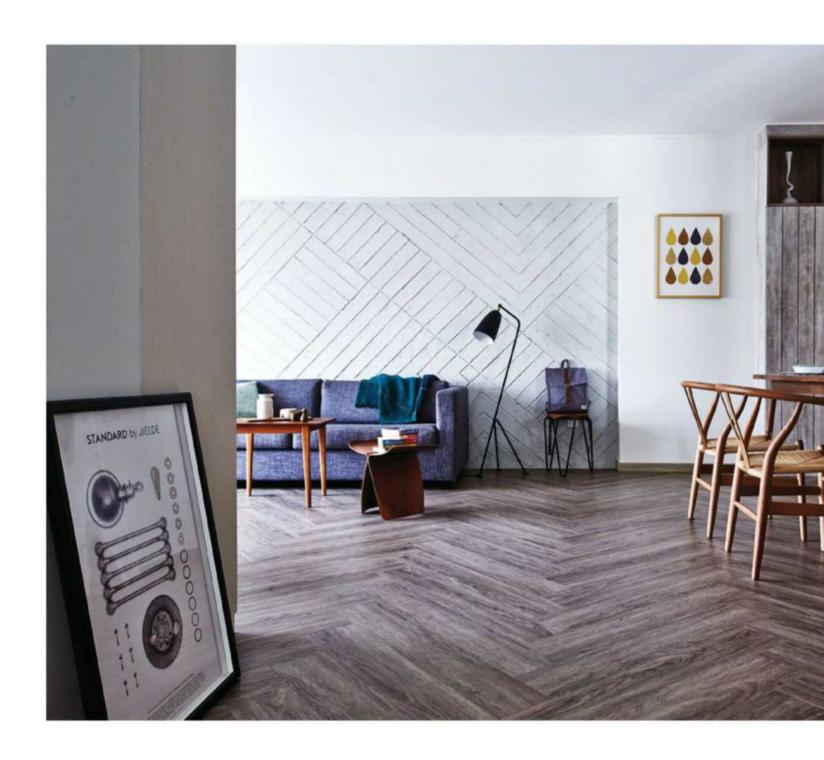
This decade-old home looks brand new after a Scandinavian-style makeover.

> WHO A couple in their early 30s

H O M E Five-room HDB flat in Sengkang

> S I Z E 1,184sqf

> > LEFT
> > Full-height
> > cabinets keep
> > clutter neatly
> > tucked away, and
> > allow for a clean
> > decor style. The
> > ceiling fan is from
> > Spin. Tableware
> > from Foundry.



This HDB apartment may look brand new, but Wendy Sim and her husband have actually been living here for about a decade. Seeing that their home was in dire need of a new look, the pair decided it was time for a revamp. However, they didn't want it to look too avant-garde, as "it's still a place to live in and not a showflat", says Wendy, who prefers low-maintenance spaces. Her husband, "the one with the eye for aesthetics", decided on a Scandinavian-themed design.

The couple sought help from Fuse Concept to realise this vision. As most of the structural

alterations were made during the first renovation, the couple only had to knock down a kitchen wall this time; replacing that with a glass-panelled sliding door.

The designer refreshed the five-room flat with wooden accents and a lighter colour scheme. All the cabinetry, as well as the panel concealing the bomb shelter, were clad with wood-look laminates of varying tones and textures from Lamitak, Admira and Lam Chuan. New furniture from Mountain Teak was introduced to match the home's new look as well. Dominating the living



LEFT
The herringbonepatterned vinyl
flooring influenced
the design of the
feature wall; the
wall pattern was
manually drawn
on wet concrete.

RIGHT The new front door and gate are customised designs.

B E L O W Laminates from three companies – Lamitak, Admira and Lam Chuan – clad the living room cabinetry.









LEFT
The entrance to the bomb shelter behind the dining table is hidden by a new door panel clad with woodlook laminate from Lamitak. The dining table and bench are from Mountain Teak.



area is the herringbone motif, which is seen in the vinyl wood-look flooring. The pattern on one of the living room walls, handcrafted on concrete, echoes the diagonal lines of the floor.

To keep the abode clutter-free, floor-to-ceiling storage units were built in various parts of the home, with the one in the living room as the "piece de resistance", says Wendy. The open shelves also allow the husband to display his colourful knick-knacks, which were acquired overseas.

At \$90,000 (excluding furnishings), this second renovation transformed the once contemporary but dull home into a brighter, more open and trendy-looking visual treat. Wendy explains that the Scandinavian theme was chosen as it is a "classic" style that would "stand the test of time", so there's no doubt the couple would relish it for another decade or more!

WHERE TO GO

Fuse Concept, TEL: 6742-8208



TOP RIGHT In the original renovation, the wall of the room on the right was taken down to make space for a sleeping area that also links to the wardrohe

RIGHT
The wall of the bathroom was extended out to accommodate his-and-her washbasins. The round mirrors are from Gubi.

OPPOSITE
The kitchen's white-based colour scheme is jazzed up with geometric wall tiles from Hafary for a playful twist.







PLAYING WITH PATTERNS

Chic, luxe and dreamy patterns fall in place perfectly, like patchwork, to create a fresh and fun look for this home.

W H O
A couple from the UK
and their two young
children

H O M E Four-room condominium apartment

> S I Z E 1,300sqf

> > LEFT
> > The Morrocan
> > Berber-inspired
> > rug was designed
> > and custom-made
> > by E&A Interiors.
> > Complementing
> > it are vintage
> > chairs re-covered
> > in a matching
> > Stark fabric
> > from the firm's
> > fabric library.



RIGHT
The homeowners'
existing headboard
was re-covered in
lush mauve velvet.
Curtains and bed
cushions were
made in fabric
from Fermoie, one
of E&A Interiors'
exclusive
suppliers.

B E L O W The vintage-style dresser adds a romantic touch to the bedroom and provides an elegant display space for photographs and accessories.

OPPOSITE
The sleek bar stools and hanging lights were specially sourced from the UK to match the look and colour of the custom-built kitchen island.



This apartment in Novena is a picture of personalised charm – wake-me-up colours combined with a refreshing touch of crisp classicism. Designer Elizabeth Acland from E&A Interiors was tasked by the homeowners to create a vibrant yet harmonious home, so "I used a lot of wallpaper, selected from our large exclusive range of European and American suppliers, to provide colour and personality," she says. Each room thus sports its own character, yet the home still comes across as a seamless, design-cohesive whole.

To open up the kitchen space, an existing glass partition wall was removed and a spacious kitchen island and breakfast bar was installed in its place. The unit's sleek white and ash tones are framed against the eye-catching mustard, grey and white patterns on the wall, lending the space a punchy but practical feel.

In the living space, the snappy colours are underfoot as well, courtesy of the large patterned rug. The master bedroom takes the tone down a notch, conveying a decidedly stronger sense of luxe. The moodier tones are combined with lush furnishings, such as the mauve velvet bedhead, which is backed by a custom-coloured wall finish of metallic plaster. Above, a glittering crystal ceiling lamp sourced from the UK makes a simple but effective statement. Likewise, in the guest ightharpoonup





bedroom, an exotic, geometric-shaped light from Vaughan dresses up the compact space. "Lighting is important in finishing a room," Elizabeth remarks, "and is an extremely important feature, especially in a small bedroom."

The couple's young girls have the benefit of having the cutest room in the home, which comes complete with tree-house bunkbeds, forest-inspired wallpaper and a mesh ceiling light with "birds". "The room is a real haven for the little ones!" says Elizabeth.

One of the original bedrooms was converted into a generous, two-person study. Custom-built cabinets in Acrylux, accompanied by solid surface desktops, bring a hint of gloss into an otherwise everyday space, which is given a further visual lift with the linen-upholstered pin-up board accessorised with chrome nailing. It's a great incentive to go to "work"!

WHERE TO GO

E&A Interiors, TEL: 6346-7555



RIGHT A carefully selected medley of rattan lounge chairs, pouffes and weave baskets – handy storage space for toys – enhance the warm and cosy feel.

(OPPOSITE)
TOP
The low
headboard and
"floating" side
tables were
designed to
give the guest
bedroom a
more spacious
feel. Whimsical
flamingo-themed
wallpaper gives
the room instant
character.

BOTTOM The study, with desk space on two sides, is big enough for two to work in. Colours are kept clean for a simple, fuss-free feel.





ONTHEHOP

It was a lively, fun-filled day of visiting stops all over the island, to fulfil the interior design and furnishing needs of Shop-Hoppers!

The Home & Decor Shop-Hop was back for the third time on January 23, Saturday, and the event saw a fantastic turnout! Ranging from young homeowners-to-be looking to renovate their first homes to those planning on revamping specific parts of their abodes, the 90 participants were taken to four stops where they gained insights to the world of interior design.

After enjoying morning coffee and sandwiches at O' Coffee Club, Shop-Hoppers

proceeded to Taylor B, where they had the opportunity to acquire stylish, luxurious furniture at warehouse prices.

Subsequent stops were made at Cosentino – to learn about the practical and stylish Silestone and Dekton materials by the Spanish brand; Elementz Design Studio, where a mock-up of a Housing Board apartment provided inspiration (and free design consultation was offered), and Bosch – to experience the latest in kitchen

appliances and watch a baking demonstration. Bosch also treated the participants to a delicious and auspicious *lo hei*, in the light of Chinese New Year, and offered great deals on kitchen appliances.

Besides enjoying a provided buffet lunch, the Shop-Hoppers also took part in quizzes and fun activities to win prizes. They were all given a goodie bag at each stop, and some even won fantastic lucky-draw prizes – topping off a great Saturday outing!



















- 8 Ken Chew, sales manager of Elementz Design Studio, shares some tips on interior design.
- 9 Tommy Ong, managing director of Elementz Design Studio, presents the lucky-draw prize to yet another lucky Shop-Hopper.
- 10 While visiting the Bosch showroom, participants enjoyed tossing and eating yusheng!
- 11 & 12 Chef John See demonstrated making tasty mini pineapple and plum cakes at the Bosch live kitchen.





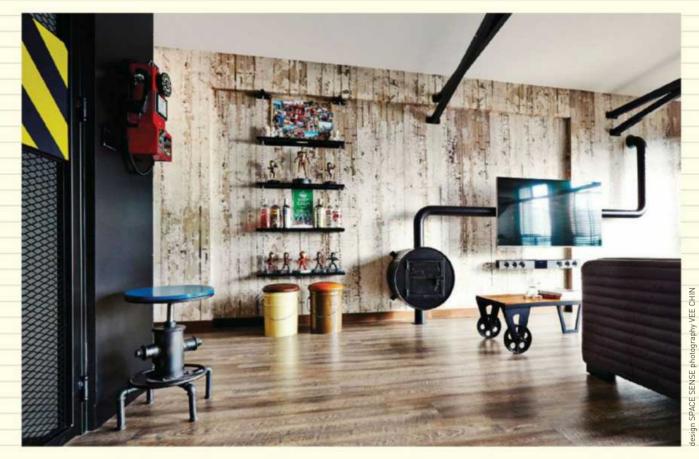














YOUR RENO & DECOR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We answer your renovation and decorating questions with help from industry experts. E-mail questions to maghomedecor@sph.com.sg.

What are some furniture pieces that can give my living room an industrial feel?

As the inspiration for the industrial look can be traced back to the style of a specific period of time - the industrial age - its elements are quite easy to identify. The industrial age saw the introduction of power-driven machines for mass manufacturing, and that's why so many industrial-style pieces feature "machine" parts such as gears, wheels and metal piping. Just one of these pieces, such as a coffee table with oversized wheels for castors. or a shelf which uses exposed metal piping for its frame, can make an impressive industrial statement in your space!

Make sure the style of the space is complementary to your furniture pieces. Think of warehouse or factory spaces, and how plain and devoid of decoration they are. So, for this look, it's best to go for raw concrete floors and walls. But as it's your home after all, you might want to soften the look of those hard-edged pieces with a fabric or leather sofa, a simple rug, and some colourful accessories.

My contractor left dried up grey concrete on the white plastic plumbing pipes in the bathroom after the renovation and it looks terrible. How can I clean up the mess?

If your renovation is very recent, you might still be able to get the

contractor back to clean up the mess. But if it has been a while, then you will have to do it yourself, which might be a little troublesome, for the tools needed.

Desmond Chew of Three-D Conceptwerke recommends using an acid wash to clean it off. Get the acid from the hardware store – just ask for the right type to clean off concrete.

"Be careful and wear rubber gloves when you handle acid. Pour a little into a small pail diluted with some water (depending on how concentrated you want it), and use a sponge or brush to apply it on the concrete.

"Avoid touching stainless steel surfaces with the acid as it will corrode," he says.









hemsley holding pte ltd

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HEMSLEY

HE BATHROOM SPECIALIST

How can I prep my wooden doors for repainting?

If you want your paint job to last longer, and have that clean professional finish, make sure you prep the surface properly. The painting process might need more than a day, even for a door, so give yourself enough time to finish the job. Follow these steps, as advised by Kitty Tan of Nippon Paint.

First, you will need to clean the surface thoroughly, removing any dust, dirt or matter on the surface. Sand the door lightly with sandpaper to remove any loose paint, and to even out the surface. Sanding it will also help the new coat of paint adhere better. Clean the door with a damp cloth and leave it to dry completely.

Before painting, make sure you protect your floor with a drop sheet to catch any drips!

Apply an undercoat, which will ensure your topcoat goes on smoothly and look more even. Look for water-based paints such as the Nippon Paint Aqua Bodelac undercoat and acrylic gloss enamel topcoat, which is low-odour, and low in Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) as compared with regular oil-based formulas. This paint is also specially formulated for doors.

When the undercoat is dry (two hours for water-based paint and one day for oil-based paint), apply the first layer of your topcoat paint and wait for that to dry (three hours for water-based paint and one day for oil-based paint) before applying the second layer of paint. Leave it to dry completely.





Is there a way to remove a stain from a tile? Would it be better to replace it? What should I do if I don't have replacement tiles?

Without knowing what caused your stain, it is difficult to advise how to remove it. Usually, applying warm water and a PH-neutral liquid cleaner, which you can find at hardware stores, would be sufficient, says Simon Cheong of tile specialist Hafary.

You can apply this to stains caused by liquids such as coffee, tea or juice. "It is very important to follow cleaning instructions on the bottle carefully to prevent further damage to the tile," he says. If you want to be ultra careful, do a test and apply the cleaner on an inconspicuous area of the floor first.

Also, he doesn't recommend replacing the stained tile as the tiles surrounding it may be damaged during the process of removing the stained piece. He suggests removing a stained tile only if you are already looking at a minor home renovation.

142 text REBECKKA WONG



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GET WATER WISE

How much water do you use in your home? Water is a precious commodity and an exhaustible one. The United Nations (in its World Water Development Report) says that with current supplies, only 60 per cent of the world's water needs will be met in 2030. Being water-wise and making an effort to conserve it will go a long way to helping our planet.

When it comes to reducing domestic water consumption, Singaporeans are doing pretty well. Our per capita domestic water consumption has been brought down from 165 litres per day in 2003, to 150 litres now. However, the target is to lower it to 147 litres by 2020, and then to 140 litres by 2030.

Singapore is one of the few countries in the world to harvest urban storm-water on a large scale for its water supply. Rainwater is collected through a comprehensive network of canals, drains, rivers, stormwater collection ponds and reservoirs. It is then treated for use as drinking water.

WHERE DOES OUR WATER COME FROM?

- PUB, Singapore's national water agency, has built a supply of water known as the "Four National Taps", which comprises local catchment water, imported water, highly purified reclaimed water known as NEWater, and desalinated water.
- The agency is responsible for the collection, production, distribution and reclamation of water in Singapore. Making sure we have enough water is only the first part of the equation. Just as important is managing demand by encouraging Singaporeans to use water wisely and value our water resources, as can be seen by PUB's tagline "Water for All: Conserve, Value, Enjoy".
- PUB has several water conservation programmes designed to reach out to the community to use water wisely including the 10% Challenge and the 10-Litre Challenge. These are designed to encourage both industries and households to save 10 per cent of their water consumption and 10 litres of water a day respectively. Visit www.pub.gov.sg for more information.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR SAVING WATER

- Laundry only use your washing machine when you have a full load.
- Kitchen wash your dishes in a filled sink (with a plug) or in a large container/bowl in your sink, instead of under a running tap.
- Showers time yourself in the shower so that you keep your showers under five minutes. Even better, turn off the tap when you're soaping, doing a body scrub or shaving.
- Bathroom turn the tap off when you're brushing your teeth.
- Garden water plants early in the morning or late in the evening (before 7am and after 7pm) when it's cooler, to minimise evaporation. Always water with a watering can instead of a hose.
- Recycle reuse your water from the washing machine (by collecting it in a bucket) and use it for cleaning jobs such as mopping the floor or washing the car.
- Flushing use the "half flush" button on your toilet for liquid waste instead of the "full flush".

- Car wash only wash your car when needed (not every day!) and use a bucket instead of a running hose.
- Leaks repair leaking taps or plumbing straight away to minimise water wastage.
- Bills monitor your water bills to see where you use the most water. If your household's water usage is above average, it's time to look at your family's water usage habits.

You can save at least nine litres of water a day by doing just one of these four things:

- Reducing your shower time by one minute.
- Using a tumbler when brushing your teeth (instead of leaving the rap running).
- Washing your vegetables and dishes in a container in the sink instead of under running water.
- Washing clothes on a full load.

HOW MUCH WATER DO YOU USE AT HOME?

You might be surprised to see where Singaporeans use the most water in the home:



Information from www.pub.gov.sg.

SINGAPORE WORLD WATER DAY

World Water Day is a day designated by the United Nations to celebrate the importance of water sustainability.

In 2016, Singapore World Water Day will be celebrated throughout the month of March to encourage the community to conserve, value and enjoy water. World Water Day is celebrated around the world, shining the spotlight on a different issue every year, with this year's theme being "Water and Jobs". The theme for Singapore World Water Day 2016 is "Make Every Drop Count". For more information, visit www.unwater.org.

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Making It Minimal

Meet Expertise and Character,
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coating, for greater durability.
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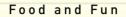


Drink With Gusto

These pitchers and jugs add a pop of colour to your table. Gusto is a sleek and compact 1-litre jug by Alfi, made of metal with a multilayer enamel coating. Thanks to its Alfidur vacuum-insulated hard glass liner, it offers up to 12 and 24 hours of heat and cold retention, respectively.

Gusto by Alfi retails for \$139 at Takashimaya D.S. and BHG Bugis.

It's available in apple green (left) and five other colours.



From Moscow, the largest edutainment culinary studio in Asia and Europe has launched its second centre in Singapore. Culinaryon has a relaxed, homey vibe that's great not just for learning about the culinary arts, but also for entertaining and events! Each master class session is hosted by an executive chef, a sous chef, an event master, a bartender and a photographer, and you can prepare three dishes out of the 300 choices and 30 globally themed sets.

Prices start from \$88 for kids, or \$118 per adult. Culinaryon is at #04-63, Tower 2, One Raffles Place, tel: 3108-0385, www.culinaryon.sg.





Full Steam Ahead

Now, your oven can function as a steamer! Miele's new range of steam ovens features a multi-steam function that excludes oxygen (which causes oxidisation) for better cooking results, compared with conventional oven cooking. Choose between built-in, combination or free-standing steam ovens, and even one with microwave capabilities!

Miele's range of steam ovens is priced from \$1,988.

View it at the Miele Boutique, #B1-01 Winsland House II, 167 Penang Road, tel: 6735-1191.



All In A Fridge

Want to know what you have in the fridge, without having to walk to the kitchen and check? Samsung's Family Hub refrigerator makes that possible, when you use the Samsung Smart Home app! On your device, see pictures captured by the fridge's built-in cameras each time the fridge door is closed. You can even update your family calendar, leave notes and more, using your smartphone, on the door's 21.5-inch touchscreen. Functionality in a sleek package!

Find out more about the Family Hub refrigerator at www.samsung.com/sg.



Get crystalclear ice cubes instead of cloudy ones, by freezing boiled water, instead of tap water.

For The Love of Durian

Goodwood Park Hotel's popular Durian Fiesta is back! There are 13 decadent durian delights – seven of which are new creations. New desserts include the durian *kueh lapis* (\$12 for a slice and \$62 for a whole cake), a traditional hit with an interesting twist; and mini D24 durian ice cream bars (\$6 for a bar and \$30 for six). The famed durian rainbow ice cream cake (\$52) is also back, in a larger size for more to share!

These treats are available from Goodwood Park Hotel's Deli, 22 Scotts Road, from March 4 to July 17.

Visit www.goodwoodparkhotel.com for more information.





Cooking Clean

The latest 200 and 400 series of cooker hoods from Gaggenau focus on functionality and convenience. The hoods' slim and sleek design ensure that they fit into any modern kitchen, and are also simple to install. Both provide silent, yet effective odour reduction when you're cooking, and have a white surface LED bar to illuminate the stove.

Gaggenau's 200 and 400 series are priced from \$5,100 to \$8,500, and are available at the Gaggenau Experience Centre, #04-01, 11 Bishan Street 21, tel: 6356-1080.





URBAN LEGEND

For an estate still in the making, Bidadari already has properties that are in high public demand; we uncover the plans for this garden oasis.



1 Since the late 1980s, the Saint Andrew's School has been located on its 4.18ha site in Potong Pasir.

2 Property investors can look forward to capitalising on rental income following the influx of foreign students looking for lodging near the estate, such as in the Hill Lodge Student Hostel at Mount Vernon. Once completed in 2020, the approximately 93ha Bidadari estate will be home to some 11,000 residential units, the majority being Housing Board (HDB) flats. The estate will provide new flats for those looking to live around the mature estates of Bishan and Toa Payoh.

Situated north of Sennett and Potong Pasir estates, Bidadari – which translates to fairy or angel in Malay – is a former cemetery and is still home to the Mount Vernon Columbarium and some gravesites, including those of some well-known Singaporeans. These will be cleared by 2017.

With notable schools such as Maris Stella High School, Saint Andrew's Secondary School and Stamford American International School in its vicinity, and flanked by three MRT stations – Woodleigh, Bartley and Potong Pasir – Bidadari homes are in high demand by young parents and expats alike, which will turn the once quiet green enclave into a bustling estate in coming years.

RECENT NEWS

The bidding exercise for most of the 10,000 HDB residential units on offer made the headlines last year for being oversubscribed. The five-room flats in Alkaff Vista topped the list, and were oversubscribed by more than 23 times – there were 3,517 applicants for just 151 units!

This is despite flats in Bidadari being more costly than similarly-sized ones in Fernvale Woods, a HDB project in the non-mature Sengkang estate, which were on offer in the same bidding exercise. A four-room flat in Fernvale Woods was going for at least \$252,000 excluding grants, compared with \$433,000 for a similar-size flat in Bidadari, according to HDB.



WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE KEY FEATURES
OF PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS IN THE ESTATE
AND THE PLANS FOR AMENITIES AND
COMMUNAL AREAS.

**Alkaff Lake View and Alkaff Court View
Offering panoramic views of Alkaff Lake in the due-to-be completed Bidadari Park, these blocks of flats come in a mixture of three- and four-room units with a handful of two-room flexi-flats only at Alkaff Court View. The design and architecture of these flats are made to enhance community bonding. Both flats feature landscaped roof-decks, which will enable residents to hold events and mingle with each other. Construction of Alkaff Lake View is likely to be completed by the end of 2019, and Alkaff Court View by the second quarter of 2020.

**Alkaff Vista Situated closer to the Sennett and Potong Pasir housing estates, these flats will be completed earlier, within the third quarter of 2019. Vertical greenery, sky terraces and roof gardens will feature prominently in the exterior design, consisting of 350 units of larger four- to five-room apartments. The unique landscaping around Alkaff Vista is aimed at establishing a park-living theme.

**Market Square (integrated development)

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Situated closer to the

KEEPING THE HERITAGE

Much of the greenery and historical significance of the current Bidadari estate will be here to stay. The 10ha Bidadari Park will recreate the original Alkaff Lake – a Japanese-themed leisure garden and lake that was popular with families on the weekends back in the late 1920s - which was located off MacPherson Road.

The park will also feature the first underground service reservoir. The raw water in the Alkaff Lake will be kept separate from the water in the service reservoir, which stores only reserves of drinking water, used to regulate supply and boost water pressure when demand is high. The graves and relics of prolific Singaporeans will be relocated to the park from the current Bidadari Memorial Garden.

Getting residents to embrace a greener means of getting around the estate was another consideration. For the first time, the HDB required that there be a minimum of one sheltered bicycle parking space for every six flats. The Bidadari Park, which will be the Green Lung of the estate, will have Green Fingers that reach the estate's borders, allowing cyclists an easy way to get around.

The Bidadari Greenway stretches the length of Bartley Road to Serangoon, and will consist of shops and shelters along the pedestrian and cycling paths.

Residents will be able to take a walk down memory lane literally, thanks to the Heritage Walk, which will feature tree-lined boulevards, and include photos and signs that highlight the history of landmarks such as the Bidadari House – once owned by a Sultan of Johor.

The National Heritage Board and HDB wants the project to ensure the historical significance of Bidadari is retained even as the estate is redeveloped.









The name Alkaff is derived from the prominent and wealthy Arab family of the same name, which built the original Alkaff Lake Gardens in 1929.

The first
underground
service reservoirs
in Bidadari Park
will be able to
hold enough
water to fill
three Olympicsized pools.

Redevelopment Authority's "A Community in a Garden" vision for the estate, greenery will be a major feature in Bidadari,

3 Keeping in step with the Urban

extending beyond the park, to include the garden-living theme

of Alkaff Vista.

weekends.

4 Homeowners can head to cafes in the neighbouring Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park 2 on the

5 Residents of Bidadari can enjoy cycling along the scenic 7.87km Kallang Park Connector Network.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS

With most of the Build-To-Order flats in the estate already snapped up in the bidding exercise held last November, prospective property buyers can look to private housing options.

One example is Bartley
Ridge, which is situated in close
proximity to Bartley MRT station
and Maris Stella High School.
Construction on the 868-unit
private condominium will likely be
completed in 2018.

Otherwise, the Botanique at Bartley is a 797-unit private condominium project located close to Nex shopping mall and

Bartley MRT station, which makes weekend grocery shopping more convenient and accessible.

Property investors looking to pocket healthy rental incomes should not overlook the potential of Bidadari. The sheer number of schools located within the estate, especially Stamford American International School, will mean a steady stream of foreign students and expats looking for housing options within close proximity.

Private condominiums such as Euro-Asia Park, located off Woodleigh Close, and One Leicester (near Potong Pasir), are popular among foreign students and expats, and fetch \$3,000 or more for rental each month (at press time), according to ST Property.

With its design philosophy, planned infrastructure and amenities, as well as future commercial developments around Woodleigh and Potong Pasir MRT stations, it is likely that the Bidadari estate will remain one of the top choices among prospective property investors and buyers in the future.

Don't miss part two of our special series on new HDB townships, where we put the spotlight on Tampines North.

SPACESMART





Atim's transformable furniture with practical tabletops that can be stowed away when not in use.





Spaceman's multi-purpose furniture Slumberdesk offers a full-size desk and a full-size bed in the space of just a study desk.

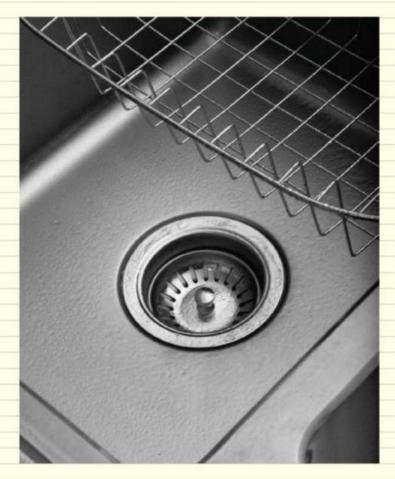


raumplus' intelligent solution Rima features adjustable closet components that increase storage capacity without obstructing access to the storage space behind.



UNCLOG IT

Tackle plumbing problems like a pro with these handy tips.



Nothing can be as frustrating as a clogged drain – when dirty sink water takes a little longer to go down, when the toilet won't flush, or when water begins pooling around your feet in the shower. The good thing is that most common clogs can be easily solved – by you! Try one or a combination of these techniques to keep the water flowing.

THE BOILING WATER METHOD

One of the easiest ways to clear out a light or small clog is to run boiling water down the drain. Pour it slowly in two or three stages, allowing the hot water to stand for a few seconds in between each pour. Let it stand for about five to 10 minutes before flushing with water.

Note, though, that the boiling water method works best on metal pipes. If you have PVC pipes, or are unsure, don't use boiling water; just use hot water (as hot as your tap produces).

THE BAKING SODA AND VINEGAR FIZZLE

Two effective and all-natural unclogging agents easily found at home are baking soda and vinegar. Pour about a cup of baking soda into the drain, as far down as you can get. Then pour half a cup of vinegar in.

It will fizzle and bubble, so cover the drain to get as much fizzing action within. Once the fizzing subsides, pour another half cup of vinegar in. Let it sit for at least an hour, or longer if you can, then flush the drain with hot water. For toilets, flush immediately when you add the vinegar.

THE DRAIN SNAKE

A drain snake or auger is a long, flexible, metal tool that bends around corners when pushed into a clogged drain. It is especially useful if you suspect that hair or gunk is the clog culprit. Push it down the drain until you hit an obstruction, and then pull up whatever is clogging your drain.

THE PLUNGER

This is one tool that you'd want to have around if you have plumbing woes. The pump and suction of the plunger can easily clear the blockage. For best results, block the overflow opening with a wet cloth to help focus the force of the plunger toward the blockage.



Place a strainer in your sink and hair trap in your shower drain to stop hair and food bits from washing down.
Remove and clean it from time to time.



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Simplicity is Key

Complete your bathroom with the sleek Catalano Star 58ST washbasin. The basin's smooth ceramic is made to be as thin as possible, and features a clean-cut rectangular design – ideal for any bathroom style! The Catalano Star can be wall-hung, or installed semi-inset or as a sit-on.

The Catalano Star 58ST washbasin is available for \$1,030 from Hemsley, #07-01 Halcyon Building, 39A Jalan Pemimpin, tel: 6337-3136.

Royal Flush

Toto's rimless toilets not only do away with hard-to-reach crevices that are a breeding ground for germs, but they also have an extra smooth ceramic glaze which prevents germs from getting trapped in the pores on the surface of the bowl. The toilet's Tornado Flush comprises three high-pressured jets of water to efficiently remove dirt, to maintain the highest standards of hygiene.

The Toto rimless toilets are available at W. Atelier, #01-01/02, 75 Bukit Timah Road, tel: 6270-8828.





Going Retro

The Penelope three-seater sofa will take you back in time! Its unique patchwork design and neat tufted detailing sets it apart from conventional single-coloured sofas in the market. Made with strong walnut legs, it's perfect if you're looking to inject some colour into your home, without going too over the top.

The Penelope three-seater sofa is available for \$1,900 from Galanga Living, #01-02 Henderson Industrial Park, 211 Henderson Road, tel: 6475-2633.



Silent and Powerful

Ironing with a steam iron is now quieter and more effortless with the Philips Perfect Care Elite Silence iron. Sound from the steam is absorbed by the silencing filters in the steam generator and, because the iron is lightweight, it glides more comfortably over clothes. In addition, its scratch-resistant soleplate is equipped with a titanium oxide layer, which helps to remove creases. With it, ironing is no longer a chore!

The Philips Perfect Care Elite

Silence iron is available for \$899



from all official Philips retailers. 🌑













WHITE GOLD

A white and gold colour palette creates a luxurious ambience in this home.







Interior designer Suki Huang, from Urban Habitat Design designed this three-room DBSS flat in Tampines to look classic and luxurious, with neoclassical-style interiors. To achieve this look, she incorporated decorative trimmings on the ceiling, and a gold and white colour palette for the cabinetry in the living and dining areas.

To add a visual spectacle to the dining area, Suki chose Swarovski LED lamps which hang at different heights. What's interesting is the choice of light bulbs in the home – except for those in the kitchen, they are all seven-watt halogen bulbs from Philips Lighting. These bulbs create a cosy ambience in the home,

while consuming less electricity and producing less heat.

The homeowners are fish lovers and requested the customisation of three glass tanks – at the entrance, living room and balcony. To create a rustic feel in the balcony, wood-like laminate from Lamitak was chosen for the cabinetry around the tank, with Hafary floor tiles to match.

White countertops from Caesarstone in the kitchen and bathrooms create the illusion of larger spaces. In the kitchen, marble-like laminate is used on the cabinets to add a luxurious touch.

The luxurious feel continues in the master bedroom, with cove lighting fitted around the oval-shaped false ceiling – this parallels the design of an oval-shaped backlit mirror in the master bathroom. The design of the gold trimmings used on the cabinets in the living room extends to this bathroom, adding a touch of elegance to the private space, while also providing a consistent design language in the apartment.

WHERE TO GO Urban Habitat Design, TEL: 6220-1262





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Weiken.com

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#07-08, 16 Tai Seng Street www.whiteboard.sg Tel: 6383-0133

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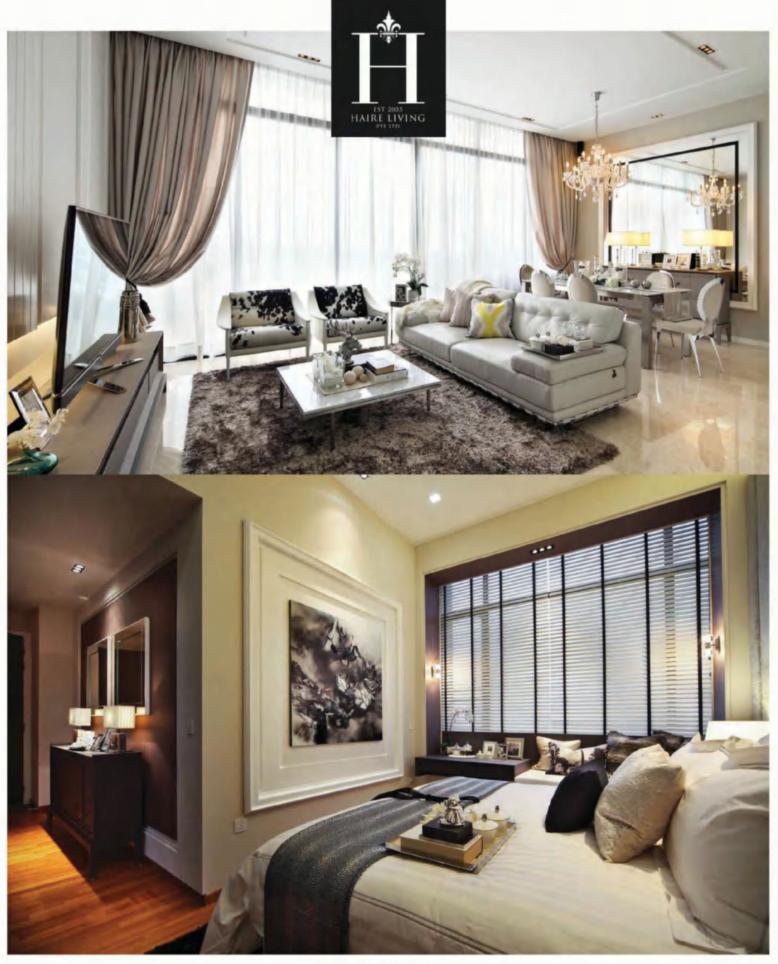
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YOU ASK, WE ANSWER

ne of the most popular sections in *Home & Decor* has got to be our Experts Say section, where readers write in to get advice on the problems plaguing their home. And over the years, we've helped scores of homeowners deal with issues ranging from pest control to paint, storage to style. But we don't do it alone; we have the help of experts in the relevant fields to provide the best possible solutions to your sticky situations.

To make it even easier for our readers to access this rich database of home know-how, we've put together a selection of problems and solutions that are common to most. And the best part is, it's free to download! We hope this booklet can be your trusty companion along your home improvement journey; this is just a taste of more exclusive digital offerings to come from *Home & Decor*, so check back on this platform!

REBECKKA WONG EDITOR

Republica



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BUILT-IN FIXTURES



Q: FOR MORE STORAGE, I WANT TO BUILD MY CABINETS ALL THE WAY UP TO THE CEILING. IS THERE A WAY TO ACCESS THEM MORE EASILY?

A: If your home has more vertical rather than horizontal space, you'd definitely want to utilise its height as much as you can. You're right to build storage units as high as you can go, but they're only useful if you can reach them – to retrieve and place items, as well as for cleaning.

The best-looking option is a ladder which slides across your wall of cabinets. Not only does it look great, by adding a vintage-industrial feel to your interiors, it is also convenient to use – you don't have to drag it out and keep it every time you need it.

Kelly Choong of Project File has designed such ladders for her clients, and she says they are popular with occupants of loft-style studio apartments. "They're usually made of power-coated steel as the material makes it easier for the ladder to slide, unlike wood. For a eight-feet-long cabinet with ladder, it will cost about \$9,000." The highest ladder she has designed is 2.2m tall, but she says there is no height limitation except for your own fear of heights!

The storage unit can have a mix of closed and open shelving, with the closed shelving nearer the ceiling, and the open shelves lower down. As the ladder has to be slanted to make it easier to climb, some allowance for space has to be made around the unit as well.

Q: I'M LOOKING TO BUY A SMALL APARTMENT WITH A REALLY HIGH CEILING, AS I HEARD I CAN BUILD A LOFT BEDROOM TO MAXIMISE THE SPACE. I'M KEEN, BUT HOW MUCH WOULD IT COST AND HOW DO I GO ABOUT DOING THAT?

A: Small Office Home Office (Soho) apartments, which usually come with ceiling heights of 4.5m to 5m, are usually marketed with the assurance that the owners are able to build a loft level to maximise its tiny footprint. Buyers have to take into account the extra expense needed to build this mezzanine, and the regulations relating to its construction.

For instance, the new structure cannot be mounted onto the existing wall and floor surfaces, and should be treated as a temporary addition, which can be removed when needed. Its design also needs the endorsement of a Professional Engineer to ensure that it is sound and, once that is approved, the drawings will be sent to the estate management for record. For this Soho apartment in Kallang (pictured), the designer at Distinctidentity constructed the 300sqf loft level, its staircase and railing out of galvanised metal, which is stable due to its weight. "We usually provide a clearance of 2.1m at the top level, enough for a person to stand up," says the designer. As the homeowner was going to use the space as a study. the designer customised wooden study desks and shelves for the room, too. The total cost came up to between \$40,000 and \$50,000. For a cleaner finish, homeowners can consider using wood to build their loft, but that would be more expensive, advises the designer.





Q: MY BEDROOM HAS A BAY WINDOW. HOW CAN I MAXIMISE THE SPACE TO BE MORE FUNCTIONAL?

A: Bay windows seem to be the bane of every homeowner's existence, particularly in a small, enclosed space such as a bedroom. However, there are ways to utilise the "top" of the window seat to suit a variety of purposes.

Assuming your bed runs parallel to the window and that you're using the mattress as a seat, secure a piece of wood on top of the window seat.

If the height of the window seat is too low, you can even add a row of drawers on top of the window seat and below the new countertop for useful storage.

Q: TO CONCEAL THE
ELECTRICAL TRUNKING IN
MY LIVING-DINING ROOM,
MY DESIGNER SUGGESTED A
FALSE CEILING OF VARIOUS
HEIGHTS. IT WILL COST US AT
LEAST \$5,000. IS THE EXPENSE
NECESSARY AND IS THE
CONCEPT SOUND?

A: This is a pretty subjective issue, as it depends on your sense of aesthetics. Some people cannot stand the sight of electrical trunking crisscrossing the ceiling. Other families aren't bothered.

A stepped ceiling design is an effective way to conceal both wiring and air-conditioner cabling and ducting. It can also help to even out eyesores such as large ceiling beams bisecting an interior.

The issue, when it comes to

cost, is how elaborate and extensive the false ceiling will be. Often, contractors will suggest fancy tray ceilings over the dining table or living area that are purely decorative. Such embellishments only push up renovation costs. But also, if you don't have the luxury of a high ceiling, be mindful about how a false ceiling – especially one with various heights – will affect your ceiling height.

Draw up a lighting plan with your contractor to determine where the air-con ducting needs to go and where you want your ceiling lights. You may only need ceiling lights along the perimeter if you consider using a floor lamp that arcs gracefully over the living area. Relying on table and floor lamps can save you the cost of an exorbitant ceiling job.





photo REZT & RELAX

Q: I HEARD THAT WE AREN'T ALLOWED TO CONCEAL ELECTRICAL TRUNKING IN HDB FLATS, BUT I REALLY LIKE THE LOOK OF FLAT WALL AND CEILING SURFACES. HOW CAN I GET AROUND THIS?

A: It is an HDB regulation that wiring shouldn't be concealed withint the reinforced concrete slabs, beams, columns, walls, wall plaster, or other finishes of its developments. Most homeowners camouflage white PVC

trunking against white walls; some make the trunking stand out (think black electrical tracks against a white ceiling) for a trendy industrial look.

Using plasterboard to hide the cable trunking will result in a neater finish and reduce visual clutter, but you will end up with a slightly smaller space and lower ceiling (and up your renovation costs). Repositioning your lights or rewiring in the future would also mean having to rip open the false wall or ceiling, and then reinstating it.



Q: MY KID'S BEDROOM HAS
NO SPACE FOR A STUDY
TABLE ONCE WE ADD
THE BED. HOW CAN I USE
THE SPACE-EATING BAY
WINDOW THAT PROJECTS
INTO THE FLOOR SPACE?

A: As the bay window is the brightest area of the room, you should try to site the desk or bed there. Depending on the room's proportions and layout, you can either place the bed on top of the wide window ledge, or build a desktop that sits on top of the ledge.

Q: I WANT TO TURN MY THIRD BEDROOM INTO AN EN SUITE WALK-IN CLOSET. THE ROOM SHARES A WALL WITH MY BEDROOM. HOW CAN I DO THE RENOVATION ECONOMICALLY?

A: Minimise demolition costs by retaining two-thirds of the wall between your bedroom and walk-in wardrobe. Knocking through a double-width doorway is enough to make the space feel luxe, open and provide ventilation. Not only do you need the wall for one row of closets, the division defines the sleeping and dressing areas and keeps clutter out of sight.

Make your layout easy to navigate and intuitive. If the room is square, place a low drawer unit in the centre for folded clothing. The closets can run along the two opposite walls. If there are windows in your new closet, turn the area underneath it into a dressing area with a mirror and table with drawers holding jewellery and watch trays and accessories such as belts and ties.





Q: I'D LIKE TO PARTITION MY DINING AREA TO CREATE ANOTHER ROOM. HOW CAN I DO THIS AND WHICH IS THE MOST AFFORDABLE WAY?

A: You can choose from several materials for the partition, and each comes with different costs and considerations. Your choices include solid hollow concrete blocks, partition boards - which is made of gypsum – and glass, says Raymond Seow, design director of Free Space Intent. If you live in a HDB flat and would like to put up a wall made from concrete blocks, you will need permission from the Housing Board as it will result in additional weight and stress on the apartment level. Walls made of gypsum board and glass are lightweight and don't require official approval.

Between glass and gypsum board, the choice is more of an aesthetic one, says Raymond. Glass, would, of course, allow more light to enter the space. You can also consider combining two materials, such as glass with partition boards.

When it comes to dismantling the wall, the lightweight materials will be easier to take down as compared to a wall constructed with concrete blocks. In terms of cost, a partition made of concrete blocks can cost as much as double that of a wall made from gypsum board.

Q: I HAVE A LONG RECTANGULAR LIVING AND DINING AREA. HOW DO I SECTION OFF THE SPACE TO HAVE A PROPER DINING AREA, BUT STILL KEEP THE LOOK CLEAN? I WANT SOME PRIVACY FOR MY DINING SPACE, WHICH CAN BE SEEN FROM THE MAIN DOOR, BUT I DON'T WANT TO BLOCK OUT THE LIGHT.

A: Establish the space's presence without compromising privacy by using partitions, which will demarcate the two areas without separating them visually. For your living-dining space, you can use a tall open display shelf between the two areas. Show off your stylish accessories on them, but leave enough space so one can see through to the other side. If you have a low ceiling, choose a table-height console which will leave half of the vertical space open. You can even position furniture pieces, such as your sofa (with the back facing the dining area), so they zone the spaces naturally. The same principle applies to shielding the dining area from the main door without losing light and ventilation. Depending on your preferred decor, a slim panel made of timber strips, a framed glass panel or even a suspended sheer fabric panel, placed to "block" the view of the dining area, can serve both a practical and decorative function.

WARDROBE

Q: I WOULD LIKE TO REPLACE MY WARDROBE WITH ONE THAT HAS A LOT OF STORAGE SPACE. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND A CUSTOM-MADE WARDROBE OR A STORE-BOUGHT ONE?

A: If your only consideration is maximising your storage space, then you should go for a custommade wardrobe which can be built right up to your ceiling. Your carpenter can also tailor the measurements of your storage compartments to the type of items you have – perhaps you have more

dresses than tops or bottoms, or need more drawers for a large collection of accessories. You will also be able to choose a surface finishing to suit your space.

But custom-made wardrobes usually cost more than store-bought ones, and may take a while to build. Also, they can't move with you. So, take into account your future plans. If you want a quick and no-mess solution, buy wardrobe modules and add extra storage space in the form of stylish boxes on top of the wardrobe, to maximise the space under the ceiting.





Q: MY PLACE IS SMALL AND I HAVE LIMITED SPACE FOR STORAGE. HOW CAN I STORE MY HANDBAGS AND PREVENT THEM FROM GOING MOULDY? I DIDN'T FACTOR STORAGE FOR THEM WHEN I FIRST DESIGNED MY HOME.

A: There is never really enough space for that growing bag collection! Although you didn't factor storage for bags into your initial design plan, there are easy ways you can still accommodate them. Make use of your vertical spaces, such as walls.

According to a spokesman for White Space Living: "Find a plain wall and install some nice hooks, spacing them out based on the size of the biggest bag you have. Hang the bags in a random order to create a feature. Hanging them out in the open will also prevent the bags from getting mouldy easily. You can install a shelf to display bags that aren't suitable for hanging."

As an instant fix, use storebought organisers from shops such as Howards Storage World and Ikea.

To prevent mould from forming on leather bags, never tie them up in plastic bags, but in the breathable dust jackets they come in, or in old pillowcases. You can even hang the dust jackets by the cord on S-hooks off your closet railing.



Q: WE ADDED ANOTHER
WARDROBE AND SHOE RACKS
WHEN WE RAN OUT OF
STORAGE IN OUR BEDROOM
CLOSET, BUT IT'S ALL GETTING
TOO MESSY. WE REALLY NEED
TO REORGANISE OUR STORAGE.
HOW DO WE START?

A: If you simply go out and buy a new closet or shoe rack every time you run out of storage, you'll end up with a jumble of heights, sizes, and styles. Banish this unsightly jumble by investing in a new, wall-to-wallstorage system.

It's amazing how spacious and inviting your bedroom will look with a seamless wall of continuous, floor-

to-ceiling closets. The reputable wardrobe specialists offer free consultation sessions, so you might like to invite a couple of them to examine your storage problems and offer their proposals.

One of the main benefits of customising is that the specialists can design interior storage that suits your specific needs. For instance, well-ventilated shoe racks that suit different shoe styles, such as big wire racks for sports shoes and narrow, or tilted shelves for stilettos and office shoes. The shoes' storage can be seamlessly integrated with your wardrobe, so the whole room will look bigger and neater while maximising every inch of space.

Q: I HAVE RUN OUT OF SPACE FOR MY EVER-EXPANDING COLLECTION OF CLOTHES AND SHOES. THE STUFF IN MY WALK-IN WARDROBE IS SO TIGHTLY CRAMMED TOGETHER, MY CLOTHES GET WRINKLED. IS THERE A SOLUTION?

A: The best solution, really, would be to toss stuff from several seasons ago, or clothes you've stopped wearing or seldom wear. If you insist on keeping everything, you need to get creative with your closet space.

Take a good look at the open area (the walk space) between the closets. If it is fairly long (for example, about 2m), this would give you space for a full-height closet as capacious as your current closet. The solution is to convert a heavy-duty archive library system and fit it with poles and shelving units. Archive systems are designed to fit flat against each other, so no space is wasted. When you want something inside, you simply pull out a section to reveal the open shelves or racks. The heavy metal frames glide in and out smoothly on floor rails.





Q: I'M LIVING IN AN OLD THREE-ROOM HDB FLAT WHICH HAS A KITCHEN FLOOR THAT IS LOWER THAN THE REST OF THE FLAT. IS IT POSSIBLE TO RAISE THE FLOOR TO MATCH THE REST OF THE SPACE?

A: The difference in height between your kitchen and living spaces was created for a very good reason – the step keeps water from the kitchen from flooding the living space during floor washings. For modern lifestyle, however, where less heavy cooking is done (unlike in the past), most kitchen floors would just require a light mop to clean off the oil and grease that might settle.

If you want to level the spaces, you have to apply for permission from the HDB before you proceed, says designer Joey Khu. "According to new HDB rules, you have to use lightweight concrete to raise the floor. Available in slabs in dimensions of 600mm by 200mm, and in various depths, they can be bought from any raw building materials supplier."

To achieve a more seamless connection of spaces without physically raising the floor, use new flooring to visually "bridge" them.

Q: I JUST BOUGHT A RESALE HDB FLAT WITH PARQUET FLOORS THAT ARE BADLY SCRATCHED. MY DESIGNER SAYS THEY CAN'T BE RESURFACED, AND RECOMMENDS REPLACING THEM WITH LAMINATE FLOORING. IS THIS THE BEST SOLUTION?

A: Parquet flooring is made of small, solid wood (usually teak) pieces placed together to form a pattern on the floor. Resurfacing should be able to remove light scratches, but if the marks are deep, even sanding down the wood won't be able to remove them. Your designer would then be right to recommend laminate flooring as an easy cover-up as the installation is fast and fuss-free, especially if you're keen to retain the look and feel of "wood" flooring.

"Generally speaking, all sub-floor surfaces such as screed, wooden flooring, tile, stone slab or plastic floor coverings are suitable for the installation of floating laminate floors," says a spokesman for Floor Depot International. Laminate flooring is also more durable as it is scratch-resistant.

To keep your flooring looking new and scratch-free, she suggests these three simple measures: Sweep regularly to prevent build-up of dust and dirt, wipe up water and other spills promptly to prevent water damage and warping, use area rugs in high-traffic areas, avoid walking over the floor with high-heeled shoes, never drag furniture over the flooring, and use furniture pads on the furniture legs.





Q: I REGRET NOT REPLACING
THE LAMINATE FLOORING IN MY
BEDROOM WITH REAL WOOD.
NOW, YEARS LATER - IS IT
POSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO THIS
WITHOUT DESTROYING ALL THE
BUILT-IN FURNITURE?

A: Besides real-wood flooring, you can also choose engineered wood, which looks the same as solid wood; and this answer applies to both types of flooring. To see if you can go ahead with switching your flooring, consider these two factors, says Brendon Goh, the director of sales and marketing at Wood & Wood Flooring. If you do replace your laminate flooring with wood, will the flooring levels of the adjoining spaces, such as the walkway outside the room, match up? The thickness of laminate flooring varies from 10mm to 15mm, so you have to choose a wood flooring of the same thickness, or else decide what

variance is acceptable.

Secondly, does your built-in furniture sit on the laminate flooring, or is the laminate flooring installed around it? In the second scenario, there's less hassle to change the flooring, but take note of the thickness of the new timber flooring and see if the bottom of the built-in pieces butts against the timber flooring at the edges where the flooring meets the furniture.

The first situation is more tricky as trimming off the laminate flooring at the edges of the built-in furniture requires extremely precise workmanship. This manual process might also damage the edges of the built-in structures. Installers can add a timer trimming to conceal these flaws after installing the new timber flooring, depending on the material of the built-in furniture. However, from an aesthetic viewpoint, this might not be ideal.

Q: I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE WOOD FOR MY KITCHEN FLOOR. IS IT POSSIBLE? WHAT MATERIALS CAN I USE TO LAY OVER MY KITCHEN TILES?

A: Water spillage is common in kitchens, so it is not suitable to overlay your kitchen tiles with real wood or laminate flooring, unlike in a living room or bedroom. To achieve the look of wood but with the added toughness, durability and ease of maintenance for such an often used space, your best choice would be to install wood-lookalike homogenous tiles. These can be laid over your existing flooring. However, overlaying is advisable only if there is already a difference in levels between the kitchen and the area adjacent to it, such as a step up or down. Otherwise, there is no way to bridge the part where the flooring of different heights meet. If the existing flooring is sound and intact, with no cracked tiles and unevenness. conventional 10mm-thick timberlook tiles will be good enough to lay over it, says Terry Tan, director at stone and tile company Rice.





Q: I'VE HEARD THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO OVERLAY FLOOR TILES WITHOUT HACKING. IS THIS ADVISABLE? IF NOT, WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

A: If your flooring is in good condition (no broken tiles or gaps), and all you want is an aesthetic change, overlaying is a good option to consider as it can be done quickly with minimal mess. However, the new floor will be thicker and will no longer sit on the same level as other flooring materials when they meet, so it is advisable to overlay the flooring of the adjacent spaces as well.

Simon Cheong of the Hafary Group recommends overlaying with tiles only for small areas of less than 100sqf, as the new tiles might "pop" up over time if they cover an area that is too large. "If the floor area is larger than 100sqf, laminate or vinyl flooring is recommended," he says.

Q: DO TILE SIZES MATTER IN TERMS OF MAKING MY SPACE LOOK BIGGER OR SMALLER? DOES THE SIZE AFFECT THE PRICE?

A: Yes, tile size – particularly for flooring – definitely matters when it comes to the perception of spaces.

A larger tile size means less grouting and joints, which makes the flooring look more seamless. Smaller tiles "break" the space up further. Besides that, "larger format tiles are said to have a more luxurious appeal," says Terry Tan of Rice. With less grouting, a larger tile size also means easier maintenance. If we were to make a direct comparison of say, Italian tiles, "a larger tile of, say, 90cm by 90cm is generally about 20 per cent more expensive than a traditional 60cm by 60cm tile," states Terry. Consider the size and shape of your surface area as well. Using huge tiles for a small footprint might not be worth the price tag. You'll need a wide surface area to better appreciate the (more expensive) larger tiles.



Q: IS THERE A CHOICE OF TEXTURES AND COLOURS FOR CONCRETE SCREED? HOW DIFFERENT IS IT FROM THE STANDARD CONCRETE FLOOR AT VOID DECKS?

A: First, let's clear the air about cement and concrete. Cement is a powder, and a component of concrete, so it is accurate to say concrete floor rather than cement floor. Says Raymond Seow, design director of Free Space Intent: "There are many different types of textures and colours for concrete screed. We get coloured concrete from suppliers, and mix it with regular concrete for the best results. As for the texture, it depends on how the worker mixes the raw materials and the way it is applied on the wall or floor. The concrete flooring at new HDB void decks is usually self-levelling, which provides a more durable, flatter and smoother surface. The older HDB void decks use the normal concrete screed." He adds that as self-levelling concrete is more expensive, most homeowners opt for regular concrete.



Q: I KNOW WOOD VENEER AND WOOD-LOOKALIKE LAMINATES ARE OFTEN USED FOR FURNITURE INSTEAD OF SOLID WOOD. HOW DO I TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

A: The plethora of materials available now lets us enjoy wood, or sometimes the look of it, in any shape or place!

As veneer, laminates, and solid wood are very different materials, how and where they can be applied will differ. But with some close scrutiny, you'll be able to tell them apart. Dess Chew of interior design firm Three-D Conceptwerke shares these tips: Veneer is a thin layer of shaved wood that is normally applied on plywood. It is prone to scratches, and can't be sanded down as it's only a skin, so veneers are usually not placed in heavy-usage areas. As the thin skin wraps around the plywood, from the surface to the edges, there are no visible joint lines. The grains also tend to be more even, with little variation. On the other hand, there

are usually telltale joint lines when laminates are applied, because they are made from fusing a thin layer of decorative paper with a thicker core substrate (there is little or no wood used at all!). Sometimes, laminate edges are given an edge trimming, which is a PVC grain simulation that follows closely with the laminate grain. Laminates are also seldom used around curved surfaces as they come in stiff sheets measuring 8 feet by 4 feet. That said, woodlookalike laminates come in a huge variety of styles, including some that look weathered, with realistic textures to boot! Solid wood is rarely used in customised carpentry works, as the supply of solid wood is regulated. They are available more commonly as finished pieces of furniture. As it is a natural, organic material, there will be variations in tone and colour, so you will find more uneven shading throughout each piece. To identify if a piece is solid wood, just look at the cross section of the panel to see if it is one single piece of wood.

Q: CAN I APPLY CONCRETE SCREED ON A DRY PARTITION WALL? WILL IT BE ABLE TO CARRY THE WEIGHT, AND WILL IT BE MORE PRONE TO CRACK LINES AS COMPARED TO A SOLID WALL?

A: Solid walls are always the best surface to apply concrete screed. It can also be applied on a dry partition wall, but only if it's made of the thicker and heavier calcium silicate board, says Dess Chew of Three-D Conceptwerke.

Still, if you're mounting something on this wall, make sure that you use the right mounting plug to prevent crack lines from appearing when the plug is hammered in.

Crack lines will also appear as a result of temperature changes, so it doesn't matter if the screeding is done on a dry or solid wall. If the concrete screed surface is near a window and exposed to various temperature changes, there is a greater possibility of crack lines forming over time, explains Dess.



Q: I LIKE THE LOOK OF MARBLE, BUT I HEARD IT ISN'T VERY ECO-FRIENDLY. WHAT ALTERNATIVES WOULD YOU SUGGEST?

A: Marble is a natural material quarried from the earth, so there are definitely environmental costs in the process of doing so. Being porous, more effort is also needed to maintain the material, such as applying a sealant annually. That might make marble not as "green" as other surfacing materials, such as ceramic tiles. Tiles might be hardier, but large amounts of energy are also required to produce them. If you're going with tiles, choose those which have recycled content. Also consider the end life of the

product. Marble, being natural, can be recycled, which you might not be able to do with tiles. To replicate the look of marble, consider using laminates, engineered quartz, or marble-lookalike tiles.

Laminates are suitable for both vertical and horizontal applications, but they are not scratch-proof or recyclable. Tiles are not advisable for use on countertops, while engineered quartz such as Silestone and Caesarstone can be used for walls or countertops. Made of natural quartz with pigments and polymer resins, engineered quartz is extremely hard and resilient, has antibacterial qualities, and stands up to stains, scratches and acids. Their durability is also what makes them sustainable, too.



Q: TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MARBLE FLOORING, CAN I CHECK IF MARBLE COMES IN STANDARD TILE SIZES? IF THERE ARE DEFECTS, SUCH AS CHIPS AT THE CORNERS OF THE MARBLE TILES, DOES THAT AFFECT ITS LOOK? AND IF THERE ARE CRACKS ON THE TILES, CAN THEY STILL BE USED?

A: Marble is cut in huge boulders at the quarry, and so are available in customised sizes. But for conventional flooring purposes, they also come in standard dimensions of 30cm x 60 cm and 60cm x 60 cm, says Simon Cheong of Hafary.

Marble tiles are usually installed with rectified edges, which means straight edges (this is so the joint lines don't appear so visible), so any chips at the corners or along the edges of these tiles are noticeable, and will affect the overall look of the floor.

If there are cracks on the tiles, they can still be used after they've been patched with marble glue and powder.





Q: I WILL BE MOVING INTO MY IN-LAWS' HOME. THEIR BUILT-IN WARDROBE AND STUDY TABLE IN THE BEDROOM ARE IN GOOD CONDITION, BUT I WOULD LIKE A NEW LOOK BY CHANGING THE COLOUR OF THE SURFACES. HOW DO I GO ABOUT DOING SO?

A: In the buy-and-throw mentality of today, sometimes, people are amazed at what a lick of paint or a new laminate can do – making something old, new again.

Have fun with laminates and make your wardrobe and table surfaces look like they've been clad in marble, exotic wood, metal or even fabric. Laminates are embossed textures provide that extra degree of realism.

For your wardrobe, as long as its internal structure is in good condition, you can simply resurface the doors with new laminate or make new doors. "However, if the condition of the wardrobe is worn out, it would definitely be more costeffective and easier to rebuild your wardrobe," says Jansen Tan, the director of product and brand at Lamitak.

The construction of your study table will determine if you are just able to change its top, says Jansen. For instance, if the tabletop is screwed onto the table legs or a support, you can get your contractor to build a new tabletop. However, for structures which are permanently fixed, replacement will be tough.

Q: MY KITCHEN IS LOOKING TIRED, BUT I DON'T HAVE THE CASH TO RENOVATE THE WHOLE SPACE. CAN I DO A PARTIAL RENOVATION?

A: It isn't possible to do a partial reno as kitchen cabinets aren't constructed as individual units, but as long sectionals. A countertop is also cut as a continuous slab to make the surface waterproof.

What you can do to pare down reno expenses is to refresh your kitchen. Go for a cosmetic redo rather than a total overhaul. As long as the appliances and cabinets are sound, you can get away with a surface redo. For instance, countertops see the most wear and tear, so a brand new one in a different colour or finish will transform your kitchen immediately.

If the cabinets are still sturdy, settle for updating the hardware – the drawer pulls and knobs – to more post or modern versions. Want a more drastic facelift? Change some of the top-hung cabinet doors to wire-glass frosted ones. Or, go for very different materials – in an all-white kitchen, you could play with an ash wood finish on some doors for contrast.

Best of all, a cosmetic overhaul will let you escape the dreadful mess of hacking and demolition, plus the inconvenience of not having a kitchen for at least two weeks.





Q: I WOULD LOVE TO DRESS UP MY BARE WALLS WITH ART, BUT I'M ON A VERY TIGHT BUDGET. WHERE CAN I FIND AFFORDABLE BUT NICE ARTWORKS? HOW ELSE CAN I DRESS UP MY WALLS?

A: You can put anything you want on your walls, and the best "art" pieces are those that are personal. Create a framed photo collage of your favourite family snaps; for a fun variation, integrate old photographs into your display as well. If you've always loved that image of your mum and dad as hip youngsters, get a digital imaging lab (try the ones at Bras Basah Complex) to scan, enlarge and

print the picture to the size you want for your wall. Typography can also add a stylish graphic edge to any space – find a fabulous quote, or select words you like, experiment with fonts and create your own personalised poster on a computer! Print on good-quality paper for a professional finish, and frame.

Alternatively, try your hand at painting your own work. Buy canvases and acrylic paint from art supply stores such as Art Friend. If you'd rather not risk making a mess at home, try art jamming at places such as Arteastiq, My Art Space and Art Jam Studio. Just pay a fee and these studios will provide the canvas, paints, and guidance to create your own masterpiece.

Q: I HAVE AN APARTMENT THAT IS ABOUT 15 YEARS OLD. IT HAS BEEN RENTED OUT FOR MANY YEARS AND LOOKS VERY OLD AND DATED. I WANT TO GIVE IT A FACELIFT AT A MINIMAL COST SO THAT I CAN RENT IT OUT AGAIN AT A HIGHER RATE. WHAT CAN I DO?

A: Giving your "tired" apartment a new look is as siple as giving it a fresh coat of paint. Keep it simple, and stick to light colours, such as a tint of white, to make the space look clean and spacious. Don't forget to paint the ceiling too!

Your flooring, another large surface area, also makes a crucial first impression. Give marble a good polish, revarnish hardwood floors and replace broken tiles.

Look around the place and decide what you would like to keep or throw. Keep items that are still in good condition, and throw out anything broken. Then you can update the look of what you are keeping. For built-ins such as wardrobes and kitchen cabinets. You can replace the doors instead of the whole structure, or even paint over them! You might also want to paint your bedroom doors.

For loose furniture pieces, replace outdated and dirty upholstery with neutral-coloured fabric that won't date so quickly. Throw the pieces out if the seats have given way. Unless the selling point of your design is a mismatched look, make sure the style of the pieces look cohesive, and not give the impression that your apartments is a collection centre for unwanted furniture.

But all these changes will not make a difference If your bathroom doesn't pass inspection. Make sure it's clean and bright; there are special paints that can go over tiles to cover dirty grouting.

Go the extra mile by dressing up the interiors with mirrors to enhance space and light, and soft furnishings sich as rugs and cushions, to make your flat look cosy and inviting.





Q: I LIKE THE LOOK OF TRACK LIGHTING, BUT HOW DO I USE THEM EFFECTIVELY TO LIGHT UP MY HOME? CAN I USE THEM FOR MOOD LIGHTING?

A: To know how to light your home, here are some basics. There are three main types of lighting – task, mood or ambient, and general. General lighting is used to light a space overall, task lighting focuses illumination where you need it, and mood lighting creates ambience. A good lighting plan would have a combination of these three types.

Track lighting can be used for both general lighting as well as mood lighting (when used with a dimmer switch), says April Kwan, regional interior design specialist at Ikea. With several spotlights along the track, and when placed above workspaces, they can provide good overall illumination in an area; the

individual spotlights can also be directed to enhance features such as a wall with art or photos, so that the surface doesn't look flat. "Plan lighting in a home by first defining the functions and activities of each space. Indicate where task lighting is needed. Then, indicate the mood and general lighting," advises April.

Q: I LIKE THE IDEA OF HAVING MOOD LIGHTING AT HOME, DO YOU HAVE TIPS ON WHERE TO PLACE LAMPS?

A: Every space needs three types of lighting. While two of them – general and task lighting, are more functional, it's accent lighting that creates mood. Accent or mood lighting is what creates that "hotel room effect", an inviting, super-relaxing ambience that just puts you at ease. You can recreate that at home too, with lamps that emit soft diffused warm light.

"Once you are ready to create a mood, turn off the brighter light and switch on the softer mood lighting. Use lower wattage bulbs – incandescent bulbs work much better for mood lighting as they have a soothing, warm glow. A dimmer switch is also a great option," says Anthony Desaram of Taylor B. Lighting Gallery.

Depending on your furniture arrangement, you can use floor as well as table lamps for accent lighting. These are more versatile than wall-mounted scones, for example. It also adds variety to the composition of items in the room. Just ensure that the colour temperature of the bulbs used are similar so the overall illumination is consistent. Anthony also suggests placing lamps in unexpected places, such as within a bookshelf or inside an armoire cabinet, to create a unique and calming effect.

Q: I LIVE IN A HDB FLAT, AND WOULD LOVE TO GET A PENDANT LAMP FOR MY DINING TABLE. AS THE CEILING IS QUITE LOW, WHAT KIND OF LAMP SHOULD I GET AND HOW HIGH SHOULD IT BE HUNG?

A: Pendant lamps are great choices for dining areas. As they come in many designs, they can also be used to express the decor theme you're after. As a general rule of thumb, hang the light about 75cm from the tabletop; high enough not to obstruct your view of other diners, but low enough to light up your table, says Malathi Balaraman of Ikea Singapore.

Another way is to have someone else assist you. Stand a distance away from the dining area and have

them lower or raise the light to decide which height suits the space best. The size and shape of your table also matters. "If you have a large table, hang your light slightly higher so it casts more light. If you have a long, rectangular surface, you will likely need more than one hanging pendant lamp," says Malathi. If you are using the dining table for studying or working, your light source should be bright enough to illuminate the whole surface well. As for aesthetics, the beauty of the pendant lamp lies in the slim profile it offers from the line of the electrical cable down to the shade. So when you choose a design, make sure that it's not too tall. You don't want it to appear as if it's stuck to the ceiling!





Q: MY APARTMENT HAS
WINDOWS ONLY ON ONE SIDE
OF A DEEP FLOOR PLAN, SO
THE OTHER ROOMS ARE DARK
EVEN IN DAYTIME. HOW DO
I LET SUNLIGHT INTO THE
CENTRE OF THE HOME?

A: To brighten up the dark side of your home, you'll have to knock away the walls standing in between. Check your apartment's structural plans to see which walls are structural, which must not be touched. Otherwise, brick walls are needed only where plumbing is integrated or privacy is an issue, such as to seclude the bathrooms and bedrooms. Replacing the other non-essential walls with glass will brighten the home and visually enlarge the space.

Dark, closed-in homes usually suffer from poor ventilation, too. Opening the interiors up to the light will make the rooms airier and healthier to live in.

If a totally open floor plan isn't your style, consider creating glass-walled rooms at the centre of the layout. In the living room shown above, the designer replaced the second bedroom with a glass "box" that the homeowners use as a study. The glass walls keep it visually integrated with the adjoining living room. Another bonus: the passageway running alongside the study – typically a dark "tunnel" – is now brighter and feels more open.





Q: I AM WORRIED THAT THE COLOUR IN THE PAINT CATALOGUE WON'T LOOK THE SAME ON MY WALL. ANY ADVICE ON HOW TO CHOOSE COLOURS?

A: We know it is difficult to envision how paint colour will look like on a wall when your only reference is a thumbnail-size square in a paint catalogue, but the great thing about paint is that it's not permanent. Here are some tips from Bernard Tan of Akzo Nobel Paints, the parent company of Dulux, that you can use to get the best results. It is always recommended to look at your paint

catalogue and choose hues under natural daylight to get the most accurate representation of the colour, he says. Looking at colours under different lighting conditions, such as fluorescent or tungsten (warm) lighting, will skew your perception of the shade. Also, bear in mind that the coloured squares in the catalogue are surrounded by white space, and tend to look brighter than when on the actual wall. "The colour usually looks a little 'darker' on a large surface like a wall. How much darker it looks is subjective," says Bernard.

Q: TO SAVE MONEY, I'M THINKING OF PAINTING THE WALLS OF MY HOME MYSELF. IS THAT A GOOD IDEA?

A: It all depends on how much time you have, and the desired outcome. For long-lasting results, it is always advisable to prep your walls before painting. That means fixing things such as dents, cracks, holes and flaking paint. Glossy surfaces also need to be sanded down slightly. The walls have to be cleaned so that the paint can go on smoothly and not trap dirt. Then, you'll have to mask the areas you don't want paint on, such as wall sockets, window and door frames, and skirtings. If you have furniture in the room, you'll have to move them out of the way, or cover them up. You might also want to prime your surfaces with a sealer if you're painting over a newly plastered surface, or repainting a powdery one. And all that comes before you even apply your desired colour. You'll need two coats of your topcoat paint, letting each coat dry in between. The good news is that new formulations have made paint almost odourfree, so you won't be inhaling toxic fumes as you paint. If the above just sounds like too much work, big paint companies such as Dulux and Nippon Paints offer professional painting services that will do all of the above prep work - plus arrange a pre-painting site visit – offer a colour consultation, move your furniture for you and provide a warranty for paint defects.

Q: I'M THINKING OF PAINTING COLOURED STRIPES ON MY LIVING ROOM WALL. MY CONCEPT IS A RETRO FUNKY STYLE, ANY ADVICE?

A: Stripes are probably the easiest pattern to execute on a wall with paint and some masking tape, and the vertical lines will visually heighten your space as well. To do the retrolicious look, use bright colours such as red, orange or green. But these colours can be overpowering, so choose either one colour or, at the most, a combination of two in the same colour family for your stripes. For a long wall, have fun by mixing stripes of different widths.

If painting is too tedious, MT Casa tapes can create your striped wall. The washi tape comes in widths of 5cm, 10cm and 20cm, and can be pasted on and removed as many times as needed. MT Casa is available at www.mttape.com.sg.





Q: I CAN'T CHANGE THE SIZE OF MY HOME, BUT CAN I MAKE IT LOOK LARGER USING PAINT?

A: Colours can change the perception we have of a space, so choose your colours wisely if the effect you want is clean and spacious, and not small and cramped.

The first rule of thumb is to use light colours, but you don't have to stick to stark white. "White" comes in different tints; barley white, for example, has a slightly creamy tone, while orchid white has a touch of layender.

In a compact room where you do not want to further "cut up" the space with different colours, you could use a warmer shade of white on the walls, and a cleaner white for the ceiling.

There are also some colour tricks you can use. For example, an ombre wall – where a darker colour tone segues to a lighter one above – serves to draw the eye upwards. Just make sure the illusion continues by using the same light [aint colour for the ceiling.

Paint company Dulux advises that a darker neutral can be used in a small space if the space is primarily used for relaxation. Just make sure that the trims, such as cornices and skirtings, are all painted in the same colour as well. Its Light & Space range might be pricier than conventional paints, but it is formulated to reflect up to twice as much light to make your space look larger.

Q: I WANT THE LOOK OF A SMALL ROOM IN MY HOUSE TO BE CALM AND RELAXING, YET CHIC AND COOL. WHAT WALL COLOURS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

A: Make a small space look visually larger but still cosy by using a light rather than a bright or dark colour scheme. A spokesman for Nippon Paint suggests pastel as well as neutral hues such as pink, beige, or pale blues. "A lighter shade of blue has low reflective properties, which

diffuses and softens light, making the room feel cool and comfortable."

Here's another way to make subdued hues interesting. "Use a monochromatic colour scheme on the furniture, rugs and walls, but choose different shades and textures of a single colour," says designer Joey Khu. "The visual balance of a room is also important. A large, brightly coloured element can overwhelm a room and reduce the appearance of space."





Q: I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE MY OLD METAL GATE A FRESH LICK OF PAINT. DO I NEED TO SCRAPE OFF THE OLD PAINT BEFORE APPLYING THE NEW COAT?

A: It's great that you are picking up the paintbrush to do some simple home improvements! Painting does need some preparation work but, in this case, you do not need to scrape off the old paint unless the current paintwork is badly peeling. For a smooth and long-lasting paint job, remove all loose paint, dirt and grease from the surface, then sand it lightly and dust clean, says a Dulux spokesman. Rough surfaces help the paint stay on longer. If the metal is rusty, apply a zinc-chromate primer, a corrosion-resistant agent.

For a healthier working environment, apply a coat of Dulux Waterbased Gloss primer – a low-odour, environmentally friendly product – followed by two coats of paint such as the Dulux Water-based Gloss, which is low in volatile organic compounds and fast-drying.





Q: I LOVE THE LOOK OF MARBLE BATHROOMS IN HOTELS, BUT HOW CAN I MAINTAIN A MARBLE BATHROOM IF THE MATERIAL IS POROUS?

A: We love the luxury of marble bathrooms, too, but marble is a porous stone and absorbs stains easily. If used in the wet area of a bathroom, soap, shampoo and other impurities can accumulate on the surface and make it even more slippery. "Most marble used in hotel bathrooms are treated with impregnators, but they will still have a certain lifespan. Impregnation only delays the effect of staining, and does not make the marble stain-proof," says Terry Tan of tile company Rice. This means that any liquid left on the marble surface

for more than an hour would still stain it. Bacteria might also build up beneath the stone surface. Maintain marble surfaces by cleaning off any soap residue and wiping wet spots after a shower. A well-ventilated area will ensure that the marble surfaces dry quickly as well. If there is no window in your bathroom, you can install a mechanical ventilator.

To enjoy a marble look without the required maintenance, Terry suggests using quality porcelain stoneware tiles that use digital inkjet technology to make it resemble the natural material. He adds: "Some leading Italian tile manufacturers even offer antibacterial tiles by partnering with Microban." Microban is a global firm specialising in antibacterial technology. Such tiles might even be cheaper than using marble, too, says Terry.

Q: I CAN'T DECIDE BETWEEN AN ELECTRIC AND GAS WATER HEATER. WITH A SMALL HOUSEHOLD OF TWO ADULTS AND TWO KIDS, WHICH SHOULD I CHOOSE?

A: There are many other factors to consider. One of them is whether your home alreadyhas a provision for access to gas and, if not, how much the installation would cost. Public housing, for example, is more likely to have this provision, as compared to older private condos or landed property. According to a study cited on the Energy Efficient Singapore website (www.tinyurl. com/heaterstudy), gas water heaters consume less energy than electric water heaters; about \$30 to \$100 in annual energy cost savings. Weigh that against the cost of installation. and the cost of the heater itself.

Gas water heaters are also said to be more expensive than electric ones. For electric water heaters, instantaneous versions use less energy than storage water heaters and work faster; but storage water heaters might be a better solution if you need hot water supplied to a few bathrooms. "For a family of four, try an electric storage heater with a minimum of 30 litres. It can supply multiple outlets with hot water simultaneously, and is automatic with a thermostat that heats and stores water at a set temperature for use. Storage heaters require only one electrical point, but having several instant heaters in one home would require as many outlets as there are heaters," says Eddie Lee, senior sales manager at Ariston Thermo. Gas water heaters also need sufficient water pressure to work well, so check with Citygas. Visit its showroom at Cross Street for more details.



Q: MY MASTER BATHROOM WINDOW IS SLIT-LIKE AND SET HIGH IN THE WALL, SO HARDLY ANY LIGHT ENTERS. BESIDES WHITE TILES AND SANITARYWARE, HOW ELSE CAN I BRIGHTEN UP THE DIM SPACE?

A: An all-white bathroom is the right way to start. But besides selecting white tiles for the floors, walls and vanity, think about multiplying whatever light comes in by reflecting it around the room several times.

Use plenty of gleaming, reflective materials. Let the sunlight bounce off polished, stainless steel fittings and

wall-to-wall mirrors. Splash out on classy, pearlised or glass mosaics to turn your shower area into a glimmering spa-like space. Instead of the usual white laminate for your cabinets, consider metallic "steel" laminates that are slightly reflective and offer a more luxe feel.

Good functional lighting is also important to make a dim space feel cheerful. The minimum is a pair of spotlights or wall lights at the vanity-sink area, and a downlight in front of the WC. Use clear glass for panel dividers and the shower screen so the small space won't feel cut up. The overall ambience will be sparkling and unusual.

Q: THE REPORT OF THE GLASS DOOR OF A SHOWER CUBICLE THAT SHATTERED AND KILLED THE HOMEOWNER, WHO FELL ON IT, HAS ME WORRIED. HOW CAN I PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING?

A: This unfortunate incident has hopefully raised awareness of the importance of using the right materials in your home, especially when it involves the safety of family members. Untreated or annealed glass will break into large shards that can cut and even impale, causing death in some cases. This is not recommended for bathrooms, and should only be used in other parts of the home, such as for glass cabinet doors. They can also be used within aluminium frames. Tempered glass is glass that has undergone a highheat process, so that it crumbles into tiny pieces with no sharp edges when broken. Alex Kwan from Museum Homes says that this is the best option for bathrooms. For greater durability, he recommends using 12mm-thick tempered glass panels, instead of the standard 8mm ones. However, the price of the thicker glass is 40 per cent more than the former. "Tempered glass has a high tolerance to impact, but if the impact is at the corners, it might shatter. For bathrooms, the right way to mount glass panels for an L-shaped shower cubicle is to set the glass into an aluminium U-channel on the floor and wall, and secure it with silicone. There is a layer of rubber insulation between the aluminium and glass, but that should be kept to a minimum to reduce friction," says Alex. Tempered glass may cost about 50 per cent more than regular untreated glass, but peace of mind is priceless. To check that you're getting what you pay for, look for the manufacturer's mark on tempered glass.

Q: I WANT TO CONCEAL THE EXPOSED PIPES IN MY HDB BATHROOM TO MAKE THE SPACE LOOK CLEANER AND MORE HOTEL-LIKE. HOW CAN I DO SO WITHOUT FLOUTING THE HDB RULES?

A: We all dream of that streamlined hotel-style bathroom, and you can definitely achieve such a look in your HDB property.

While hacking into the wall to hide the pipes within is against the rules, using a false wall to conceal the plumbing is fine. Seamless surfaces also mean your bathroom is easier to clean.

Designer Arjan Twilhaar of Aiden T. makes it a point to conceal all the water pipes in the bathrooms of his HDB projects.

"We usually expose all the water pipes before concealing them with a calcium silicate board, which we then overlay with tiles. It is important that the contractor uses this type of board as it is waterproof; gypsum boards won't hold up in a wet area. Then, we seal up the entire length of the shower stall to cover any pipes, before installing either a rainshower from the ceiling or from the wall."





Q: I KNOW THE RULES
CONCERNING HDB BATHROOM
RENOVATIONS ARE QUITE
RESTRICTIVE, SO I CAN'T JUST
SWTICH THE LOCATION OF MY
BATHROOM. WHAT CAN I DO
AND NOT DO?

A: You won't be able to move our bathroom from its original location because that means diverting your water supply from the original pipes provided by the Housing Board. Doing which might lead to water leakage, which could affect the unit below.

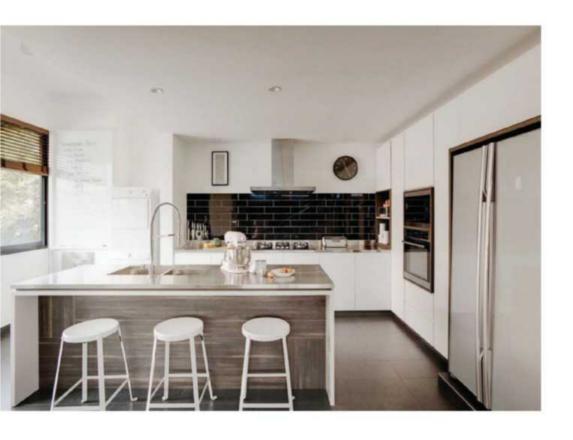
What you can do the "increase" the bathroom's size is to bring out the washbasin up to 60cm out from

the original footprint of the bathroom, says Patrick Lai of Meter Square. You can also take down the connecting wall between two bathrooms if they are adjoining spaces, subject to the HDB's approval.

If you are renovating a new flat, you can only overlay new tiles over the existing bathroom wall and floor tiles, as waterproofing has already been done. However, three years later, you'll be able to hack off the old tiles and replace them.

Take note that only ready-made fiberglass tube are allowed to be installed in HDB flats. You can't construct a water tank out of concrete as that might lead to loading issues.





Q: I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE A KITCHEN ISLAND COUNTERTOP IN MY HDB FLAT, BUT THAT INVOLVES RE-ROUTING THE PLUMBING. IS THIS VERY MESSY AND EXPENSIVE?

A: HDB regulations concerning renovation of bathrooms and kitchens are pretty strict, and for good reason, as waterproofing has already been done, and water damage can affect your neighbours' homes.

For newer HDB rules, water pipes are not allowed to be concealed within the floor slabs or walls, due to possible leakage when waterproofing is compromised.

For newer HDB flats, the water pipes are concealed by the developer, so any alteration has to be exposed. You can conceal them only

with cabinets," says Gary Boo of Arte Living Studio.

But island countertops are possible in HDB kitchens! Gary offers two solutions, the first is to run the water pipe along the top edge of the kitchen wall and drop it form the ceiling above the island. You will need to design a ceiling pelmet to hide the piping and vertical panel which connects to the island. You will also have to hack the floor tiles, and re-run the waste-outlet PVC pipe.

The second solution is to create a platform, on which the island will sit, to hide the pipes. You will need to create an access panel so that you can reach the water pipes where the joints are, in case of leakage.

Gary estimates the cost of the plumbing work to be around \$1,000 to \$1,500.

Q: I RECENTLY BOUGHT NEW KITCHEN APPLIANCES, BUT THEY ARE CLUTTERING MY TABLETOP! I'M THINKING OF GETTING A KITCHEN ISLAND TO STORE THEM AND ALSO TO USE AS A WORKTOP, BUT I DON'T WANT THE ISLAND TO BE PERMANENT. WHAT OPTIONS DO I HAVE?

A: An organised kitchen isn't only more pleasing to the eye, it's also safer as power cords and heavy appliances are kept out of the way when not in use. A kitchen island is a great depository for your new gadgets, and you'll be increasing your usable space with a countertop, too.

April Kwan, interior design specialist at Ikea Singapore, advises that when choosing one, make sure you have a minimum of 120cm of space between the fixed kitchen units and your new island, so there is enough space for the doors and drawers to open from both sides (kitchen cabinets are typically 60cm in depth). Otherwise, get a mobile version which can be moved when clearance is needed. Ensure that there is adequate light for you to work safely.

Ikea stocks both mobile and non-mobile kitchen islands that come in a variety of materials and with different storage options such as drawers, cabinets and open shelves of varying heights.



photo IKEA



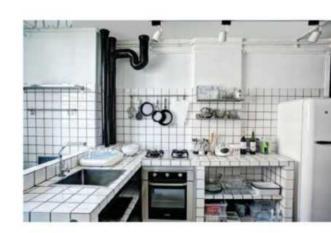
Q: I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT, FOR FENGSHUI REASONS, THE STOVE AND THE KITCHEN SINK SHOULD NOT BE PLACED SIDE BY SIDE AS FIRE AND WATER WILL "CLASH". HOW CAN I RESOLVE THIS IF THE STOVE AND SINK HAVE ALREADY BEEN FIXED IN MY KITCHEN?

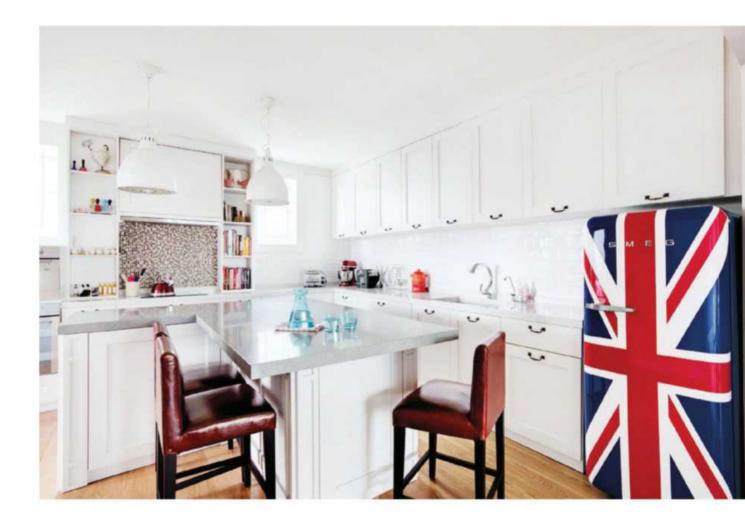
A: According to geomancer master Jet Lee, it is all right for the kitchen stove and sink to be positioned side by side, or adjacent to each other at a 90-degree angle.

The stove and kitchen can also be placed opposite each another, but they should not face each other directly. If they are, you can place a small plant (which resembles the wood element) between them. This is because in the constructive cycle of elements, Water gives rise to Wood, which gives rise to Fire. This ensures that the fire and water elements now work together instead of against each other.

Q: I WON'T BE USING MY KITCHEN MUCH, AND DON'T SEE THE POINT IN BUILDING CABINETS, WHICH WILL COST A LOT. WHAT OTHER OPTIONS DO I HAVE?

A: We're so used to seeing the typical two rows of cabinets (overhead and under-counter) in kitchens that we don't usually ask ourselves if they're even necessary. Carpentry usually makes up the bulk of the cost of a kitchen renovation, and if you don't plan to cook that much, save on costs by building only what you need. You'll still need a countertop to work on, and you can build storage spaces underneath that, but doors are optional! For example, homeowner Christine Choo designed a basic concrete and- tile frame for her kitchen countertop and left it with open shelving. Without overhead cabinets, your kitchen will look brighter and "lighter". Use that vertical space to mount rails for hanging pots and pans, and cooking implements. They'll be easier to access, too!





Q: MY CURRENT KITCHEN
CABINETS ARE MADE OF WOOD,
AND I'M TIRED OF THE CURRENT
LOOK. AS THEY ARE IN GOOD
CONDITION, IT WOULD BE A PITY
TO RIP THEM OUT AND INSTALL
NEW ONES. I'M THINKING OF
PAINTING THEM WHITE. IS THIS
A GOOD IDEA?

A: Paint is one good way to refresh the look of your home, whether it's applied to your walls or furniture.

Painting over your old cabinets also gives them a new protective finish. A spokesman for Nippon Paint suggests using Nippon Paint's Aqua Bodelac, which comes in white and "has anti-fungus properties and good coverage".

First, prep your surface by filling in any holes or cracks with a nail-hole filler or plaster, using a putty knife. Lightly sandpaper the surface to get rid of debris. Wipe your kitchen cabinets with a mild detergent and

let them dry thoroughly before painting. Cover with a layer of undercoat such as the water-based Nippon Paint Aqua Primer Sealer Undercoat to help the paint adhere better to the surface. Lene recommends applying two layers of Aqua Bodelac paint over the undercoat. As this paint is low in volatile organic compounds, can be wiped down easily and resistant to stains, it's a great choice for kitchens.





Q: I LOVE THE WAY CARPETS
AND RUGS SOFTEN A SPACE,
BUT I'M NOT SURE HOW TO
USE ONE IN MY LIVING ROOM.
DOES THE CARPET GO UNDER
THE FURNITURE OR STOP AT
THE EDGE? AND IS THERE
A GENERAL GUIDE TO HOW
BIG A CARPET SHOULD BE IN
RELATION TO THE ROOM SIZE?

A: Carpets and other soft furnishings are crucial in infusing a space with cosiness and texture. As Hadi Nishaburi of carpet specialist Jehan Gallery puts it: "A rug in any room defines a space. In the living room, its main role is to bring the furnishings together, create harmony in the space and, in doing so, build the desired ambience. A rug helps to demarcate an area and emphasise the importance of that space, too."

He says there are no fixed rules to determine the size of your carpet or rug. "Proportion is key. The design and colour of the rug plays a part, too. Decide if the rug is to be the focal point or just serve as a complement to the design of the room. "If it's the focal piece, it can be of any size within the confines of the living set, going slightly under some pieces or beyond the living set." Placing the edge of the rug underneath your sofa, for example, hides the edge from view and creates the illusion of a bigger space.

"As a complementary piece, the rug should not fight for attention and it should be just slightly under the general living set's size. It should help the living set create a sense of space and not make the room look cluttered," says Hadi.

Q: MY SOFA, TV CONSOLE AND DINING SET ARE ALL IN, BUT SOMEHOW MY LIVING ROOM STILL FEELS LIKE A FURNITURE WAREHOUSE. WHAT'S MISSING?

A: Assembling all the basic furniture pieces for your home does not quarantee a warm, lived-in feeling.

Keep in mind that the largest surfaces in any home are the walls and floors, and these areas can make your space look painfully bare in the "just-moved-in" period. To create that lived-in look, you need to add lots of textural interest, a stronger colour scheme, and pieces of art.

Start from the floor up – add a big carpet in a strong colour and a deep shag pile. This will not only add texture but visually "tie together" the loose living room furniture. Next, add large, plush cushions to the sofa for depth and a bit of contrast colour. To dress up the blank walls, look for a big painting to place behind the sofa to anchor the scene. You can find a wide variety of elegant, well-priced contemporary artworks, imaginatively framed and ready to hang, from trendy stores such as Crate & Barrel.

Lastly, add some personality to your space with groupings of family photographs on the walls, and neat displays of your favourite objects and your kids' creative works on the TV console and sideboards.





Q: THE DOOR TO THE BOMB SHELTER IS FACING THE LIVING AREA – IT'S SUCH AN EYESORE. HOW CAN I DISGUISE IT?

A: There are many ways to hide the bomb shelter door. They range from cheap and easy ideas such as hanging a textile artwork over it, to resurfacing the door with chic, expensive panelling to make it "vanish" into the surrounding wall panels.

Q: I KNOW MIRRORS MAKE A SPACE LOOK LARGER, BUT HAVING TOO MANY OF THEM CAN LOOK TACKY. HOW DO I INCORPORATE THEM INTO MY HOME?

A: A strategically placed mirror can do wonders to enhance a space, but a mirror in the wrong place can kill the look of your decor. For dark and narrow hallways or corridors, a large mirror along one wall, or a tall mirror at the end of a long space, opens up the confined area considerably. They can also be used to reflect light into a darker space.

You can create a focal point at the corner of two walls, such as in your wardrobe area, with a tall mirror. A more casual and modern way to display a tall mirror is to simply lean it against the wall. In the living area, use mirrors on one wall to reflect decor items such as your dining room's pendant lights, a piece of art, or even a nice view. Don't use them to reflect unflattering images such as messy or awkward spaces. Framing a mirror in the same way you'd frame an artwork gives it more presence.

Now for the don'ts. Don't place two mirrors opposite each other; this will only create a confusing space. You can also follow the fengshui rule of not placing a mirror where you will catch your reflection when you wake up. Lastly, avoid placing a mirror on the ceiling.





Q: WHAT IS THE RIGHT ALLOWANCE OF SPACE TO LEAVE BETWEEN THE BACK OF MY SOFA AND A PIECE OF ART?

A: There are some factors to consider when hanging art, especially when there are pieces of furniture around it. For art hung above your sofa, make sure that the artwork "easily clears the heads of those seated, so guests will feel comfortable enough to lean back and relax without fear of hitting the frame," says Alexandra Mytton-Mills, the creative director of frame shop The Frame Society. She adds: "Artworks are usually hung at eye level, which is between 1.6m and 1.65m from the floor to the middle of the artwork. This increases the maximum visual enjoyment you get from the piece, without having to tilt your head to look up at it. "This, however, can be adjusted if you want to create a more intimate area with lower seating, for example, so that the art really becomes part of the space."

Q: DECALS SEEM TO BE
A VERY QUICK AND EASY
WAY TO DECORATE A BARE
WALL. THERE ARE SO MANY
DESIGNS AVAILABLE – ARE
SMALLER REPEATED MOTIFS
NICER OR ONE BIG MURAL? I
DON'T WANT TO SPEND THE
WHOLE DAY PUTTING THEM
UP, EITHER. AND HOW DO I
MAINTAIN THEM?

A: Wall decals are indeed a fast decorating fix for bare walls, and if you get tired of the design after a few years, it's easy to just remove them! But there are so many fabulous designs available; we understand that it might be difficult to make a choice. Carmen Tang of Mr Fox Creative Loft uses wall decals for her interior projects and provides some tips on selecting them: "The size of the decal really depends on the objective of your space. As a designer, my rule of thumb is to always 'go big or go home'.

I'll customise bold and original wall decals for my clients for that dramatic interior statement. "However, if your aim is not to create a feature wall, but to complement other highlights in your space – such as designer furniture or a painting - then it makes sense to opt for smaller decals that will serve as a great backdrop without overpowering the 'star' of the room." Readymade wall decals are meant to be DIY projects, with enclosed instructions that make them easy to apply and remove. Large customised ones are slightly trickier as they require professionals to get the job done, says Carmen. Decals are also easy to maintain. She advises wiping with a slightly damp cloth and soapy water to remove dirt. dust, or other substances that may end up on your decals. Avoid using harsh chemicals or abrasive cleaning agents which may damage the material.





Q: WE INSTALLED SLATE TILES
IN OUR BATHROOM 20 YEARS
AGO. RECENTLY, SMALL BITS
AND "THIN SLICES" HAVE
FALLEN OFF. WHY IS THIS
HAPPENING, AND WHAT CAN
WE DO TO KEEP THE TILES
FROM WEARING DOWN?

A: A popular choice for bathrooms 20 to 30 years ago for its tropical resort-style aesthetics, slate (a type of quartz) is a sedimentary stone that is naturally flaky, says Terry Tan of Rice Fields. "Layers of the rock face will come off over time,

which is normal in natural tone."

Terry explains that there is no point restoring the relatively inexpensive materials, as the flaking cannot be resolved. In fact, with better alternatives such as more durable lookalike homogeneous tiles in the market, the use of natural slate has been phased out.

However, if you want to maintain your slate surfaces, you can apply a sealer. But if the slate is underfoot, it's best to replace the floor to prevent your feet from being cut by the uneven surfaces. Q: I LIVE IN A HDB FLAT.
LATELY, SOME CONCRETE
PIECES HAVE BEEN FALLING
FROM MY CEILING. WHAT IS
CAUSING THIS PROBLEM, AND
HOW DO I FIX IT?

A: This is known as spalling, and it happens when steel bars embedded in the ceiling start to corrode, causing the concrete to crack and fall off in chunks. This usually happens in old buildings. This deterioration is called carbonation, and it could be caused by a humid environment, where moisture and carbon dioxide enter the concrete and cause the steel parts to rust.

Spalling concrete won't affect the structural integrity of the building if it's repaired quickly; leave it, and it might spread and weaken the building structure. A general contractor should be able to repair your ceiling.

To prevent this from happening again, the HDB recommends painting your ceiling with good-quality paint every three to five years, to seal cracks and also holes that have no use, as well as provide sufficient ventilation for the area.



Q: EACH TIME I RETURN
FROM A HOLIDAY, I FIND THAT
COCKROACHES AND ANTS
HAVE INVADED MY HOME EVEN
THOUGH THERE WAS NO FOOD
LEFT OUT IN THE KITCHEN,
AND ALL GUTTER TRAPS HAD
BEEN COVERED. HOW CAN I
PREVENT THIS?

A: Learning how these pests get into our homes, and removing the elements that attract them, may offer some help. You might have covered the gutter trap and shut the bin chute, but because cockroaches have flat bodies, they are able to slip through any cracks or gaps around bin chutes or doors, says Lim Min Hui, operations director of Rentokil Initial Singapore. She says that cockroaches

are drawn to moist conditions so, as a preventive measure, fix any leaking taps and clean hard-to-reach areas behind cabinets or the fridge. Before going on a holiday, homeowners should seal their home's bin chute cover to prevent cockroaches from entering. Ants also tend to appear in damp, moist areas. Check moisture sources such as sinks, potted plants and electrical outlets in the kitchen and bathroom for ants' nests. Seal all cracks in tiles and walls to prevent ants from crawling through.

If the problem becomes serious despite all your efforts, consider engaging a pest-control service provider to identify areas prone to infestation, and to use more professional means of luring them out.

Q: WHY DO OUR NEWLY
PLASTERED WALLS KEEP
CRACKING, DESPITE BEING
MENDED? HOW DO WE KNOW
IF THE PLASTERING IS DONE
CORRECTLY, AND WHAT CAN
WE DO TO PREVENT IT FROM
CRACKING AGAIN?

A: Some investigation work is needed before knowing how you can treat the problem.

"Different factors cause the plaster to crack, and the type of crack also determines what repair work has to be done," says a spokesman for White Space Living.

"If it's a new wall constructed with bricks, then I believe it is a hairline crack due to the expansion and contraction of the wall. A new wall needs a certain time to settle down, which could be up to a year or more. The solution is to wait for the cracks to ease, then apply a simple coat of plaster and paint over them.

If an existing wall cracks, it could be that the layer of plaster used is too thick. This happens when sometimes the wall isn't aligned and more plaster is applied to the surface for it to have a nice, flat finish. If it is a hairline crack, you may want to get elastic paint to cover it and then finish off with regular paint."

Q: I'VE TRIED
UNSUCCESSFULLY TO
SCRUB AND BLEACH OUT
THE GREEN STUFF THAT
GROWS ON THE EDGES OF THE
SHOWER SCREEN DOORS. ANY
SOLUTIONS?

A: Your shower screen's glass panels are probably held in place in their aluminium frames by a clear, elastic epoxy sealant. Many flexible sealants will harden and shrink over time, leaving tiny gaps between the glass and the frames. This "green stuff" is most likely mould growing within or under the sealant, due to the humid conditions in the shower.

It's unhealthy to let bacteriabreeding mould grow freely in places that you and your family use on a daily basis. Scrape out and replace the entire strip of sealant to get rid of the gunk. Before you apply the new sealant, take the opportunity to scrub down the inside corners of the glass and the aluminium frames to get rid of any slimy residue.





Q: BLOTCHY MOULD AND
MILDEW SPOTS ARE FORMING
ON MY BATHROOM CEILING,
ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA
ABOVE THE WASHBASIN. I HAD
REQUESTED FOR ANTI-MOULD
PAINT TO BE USED ON THE
CEILING, SO I'M WONDERING
WHY THIS IS HAPPENING.

A: Although anti-mould paint was used, in cases where there is water leakage or when it's a poorly ventilated environment, mould and mildew can still form. "If there is no water leakage, scrape away the loose paint before applying Nippon Paint Anti-Fungus solution, or household bleach, and leave it to dry fully. Then apply one coat of sealer, and two coats of anti-mould paint. Improve the ventilation in the space to make sure the problem doesn't return," says Shelly Chan from Nippon Paint.

Installing a ventilation fan will also help prevent mould. Look out for Nippon Paint's Odour-less antimould ceiling white paint, which specifically targets problematic areas such as kitchen and bathroom ceilings.

Q: HOW CAN I REMOVE STAINS FROM A PAINTED WALL, SUCH AS MARKS MADE BY CRAYONS, MARKERS, AND BLU-TACK?

A: In a home with young children, it's inevitable that your walls will become convenient canvases for these budding artists. "Common marks can be easily cleaned by wiping with a soft sponge and a little soap solution, says a spokesman for Dulux. You can also try removing crayon and marker stains with baking soda. Sprinkle the powder on a damp cloth, and scrub hard at the stain. Some also swear by toothpaste, which, like baking powder, acts as an abrasive to scrub out the stain. If the marks are on a coloured wall, carry

out a patch test on an inconspicuous corner to make sure your chosen method doesn't remove paint colour as well. Blu-Tack that has been left on a wall for a long time might stain the surface when oil from the pliable putty seeps into the surface, especially if the wall was painted a long time ago and has become porous. To remove these stains, Blu-Tack's website suggests a citrus-based stain remover. This might remove the paint as well, and your wall will need to be repainted. Why not kid-proof your walls with washable paints instead, and avoid the hassle of cleaning? Both Dulux and Nippon Paints have paints that protect wall surfaces and make stains and marks easy to clean.

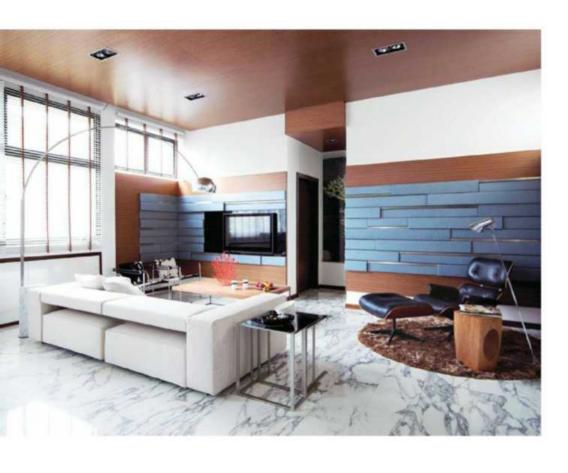


Q: DUST IS A BIG PROBLEM IN MY HOME, HOW DO I KEEP IT DUST-FREE?

A: Do you keep lots of decorative items at home and hoard paper {old newspapers, magazines and books}? Is the majority of your furniture upholstered, and is your closet stacked full of clothing? If you've answered yes to these questions, we're not surprised you have a dusty home, especially when cleaning is not done regularly.

Dust is made up of tiny particles of fabric fibres, paper, hair, dead skin, dirt, and so on. It's important to get rid of dust on a regular basis, as it can cause health problems. To cut down on the dust in your home, clear hard-to-clean items that they can settle on, such as decorative objects. Throw away old paper items (which degenerates), cut down on fabric-covered furniture and other soft furnishings (which dust is attracted to), and clean out your closet (dust falls from your clothes when you open the closet door, just look at the floor of vour closet!)

Regular cleaning is the key to keeping your home dust-free. Sweep often, vacuum regularly, and wipe down surfaces with a damp cloth or a microfiber cloth, which can trap the smallest dust particles. Bedding should be changed once a week for pillowcases and sheets (don't leave them longer than two weeks). Once in a while, take your pillows and duvets, as well as seat cushions and rugs, outside and beat them (with a broom stick or pole) to get rid of the dust that has settled on them.



Q: I WOULD LOVE A LOW-SLUNG UPHOLSTERED SOFA FOR MY LIVING ROOM, BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT MAINTENANCE AS I KNOW SOME UPHOLSTERY CANNOT BE REMOVED FOR WASHING. HOW DO I MAINTAIN SUCH SOFAS?

A: A stitch in time saves nine so, first, prevent stains and spills from ruining your upholstery by using fabric protection and cleaning products found in DIY stores.

Some brands even have their own proprietary range of products.

Apply them to areas with high bodily contact such as the armrests, backrest and seats. Other than taking precautions when you're having a meal or snacking while sitting on the sofa (for example, using a plate), regular maintenance is key to keeping your upholstery in good shape. Regularly remove dust from upholstered furniture with a vacuum cleaner using the soft brush nozzle, as fine dust particles can stick to fabric and result in wear, says a representative from Danish furnishings company Boconcept. Boconcept also recommends cleaning pieces of furniture that come into direct contact with skin, at least twice a year to keep the fabric from degrading due to natural body perspiration.

Another way to protect the sofa's armrests is to cover them. Some brands such as Boconcept offer a specially designed tray that fits over the armrest, providing a more stable base for drinks. Alternatively, lay a throw over the armrest or back, which acts as a protective layer and decoration, too.

Q: HOW DO I GET RID OF THE SMELL THAT LINGERS ON A LEATHER SOFA SOMEONE HAS SLEPT ON?

A: As a porous material, leather is affected by its environment and can absorb smells and oils that it comes into constant close contact with. A well-made leather sofa can last a lifetime if it is properly maintained. If your sofa has developed a smell, a spokesman for furniture company Domicil has this advice: "Air it in the open for about 12 to 24 hours. Exposure to sun will banish most odours. If it's rainy, air it near an open window or doorway with the aid of a fan. Cleaning, polishing and conditioning the leather with a good leather maintenance kit is also effective in removing odours. If these methods don't work, try putting some baking soda on a thin cloth or mesh and place it on the sofa overnight. The baking soda will absorb the smells."





Q: I PLAN TO RENOVATE
MY HOME SOON AND WAS
WONDERING IF I SHOULD HIRE A
CONTRACTOR OR AN INTERIOR
DESIGNER. CAN YOU OFFER
SOME POINTERS?

A: The role of a contractor is quite different from that of an interior designer. An interior designer is able to offer stylish solutions to design problems, tailoring the home for both form and function, to your needs. A contractor is someone who executes the design; he will manage the workers to carry out the wetworks, carpentry, painting, and so on. To decide who to choose, ask yourself these questions. Firstly, how extensive will your renovation be? If it doesn't involve heavy redesigning of your spaces, perhaps just a basic sprucing up of the existing rooms, then go with a contractor. If you need

someone to help you take all your ideas and translate them into a unified look for your home, then you'll need an interior designer. Would you have time to project manage your renovation? If you engage an interior designer, you only need to work with him during the renovation. The designer will make sure the agreed design is being carried out to specifications. When working with a contractor, you'll need to provide instructions on what you want, and monitor his work progress yourself.

What's your renovation budget? A contractor will simply charge you for the work that has been done, but with a designer, there are design fees involved, for their professional skills and to a certain extent, the time spent coordinating the project. Depending on the designer, this fee might either be built into the total bill or be a payment separate from the physical works done.

Q: I FOUND AN INTERIOR
DESIGNER WITH A GREAT
PORTFOLIO ONLINE, BUT ONLY
THE HANDPHONE NUMBER
IS LISTED, WITH NO OFFICE
ADDRESS. HOW CAN I FIND
OUT IF THIS BUSINESS IS
LEGITIMATE, AND IF ANY
COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN
LODGED AGAINST IT?

A: Always find out more about the designer or interior design (ID) firm you're keen to hire. A search on the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA) website will tell you if the company is "live" and how long it has been around, but not the address of the firm or how reliable the people running the company are. IDs who are freelancers or working part-time won't have a formal office address.

"Unfortunately, barriers to entry in the ID industry are low, even nonexistent, so the saying 'buyer beware' has even more significance for the engagement of ID services here," says a spokesman for Interior Design Confederation Singapore (IDCS). He recommends that homeowners seek out IDCS to see if the key personnel of the company are members. Membership isn't mandatory, but it would ensure that the ID is of a certain professional standard. "We advise clients to take their time and ask as many questions as possible before signing a contract," he adds.

If the ID claims to have worked on the projects featured on his or her websites, ask for references or if you can do a site visit to see the work for yourself. You might also want to check with the Consumers Association of Singapore [CASE] to check if any formal complaint has been filed.





Q: THE SUNLIGHT COMING
INTO MY BALCONY CAN BE
QUITE HARSH, AND I WOULD
LIKE TO GET QUICK OUTDOOR
BLINDS. ARE BAMBOO CHICK
BLINDS SUITABLE? WHAT ARE
OTHER ALTERNATIVES THAT
WILL WITHSTAND THE SUN
AND RAIN? ALSO, HOW DO I
MAINTAIN THEM?

A: Bamboo blinds will be a good choice for your balcony as bamboo is a hardy material that can withstand outdoor weather conditions.

However, there have been cases of "bamboo" blinds turning mouldy or becoming porous and hence easily broken over time. That might be a hint that your blinds are not 100 per cent bamboo.

Other alternatives to explore, especially if you prefer a more sleek and contemporary look for

your balcony, are UV blinds and outdoor roller blinds. Both the components and materials for these blinds should be made for outdoor use.

UV blinds look just like regular slatted blinds but are made from PVC to withstand the harsh sun and rain. The material can also be made to look just like wood, too!

Maintenance is simple, says Jessy Ng, of window blind specialist Onna. "Just wipe the slats with a damp cloth to clear any water marks left from the rain or daily dust," she says.

Outdoor roller blinds use fabrics that are thicker and can block UV rays. Onna retails a perforated outdoor fabric that allows light to partially poass through it whle blocking UV rays. To clean, wipe with a damp cloth or vacuum the fabric.

Q: MOST NEW CONDOS
EITHER DO NOT HAVE
LAUNDRY AREAS, OR HAVE
ONES THAT ARE REALLY
SMALL. APART FROM USING
THE BALCONY, IS THERE
A WAY TO INCORPORATE A
DECENT SPACE FOR HANGING
LAUNDRY? WE AREN'T KEEN
ON USING DRYERS.

A: With the amount of sun we enjoy in Singapore, it's a sheer waste not to use it for drying laundry. Using pure, natural sunshine saves energy compared to using a dyer, and it also sanitises clothes, kills dust mites, and makes them smell better, naturally! However, if you don't have the space for a drying rack, get a good ol' ceiling-mounted rack to hold your laundry poles.

If your condominium doesn't provide pole holders outside, consider getting an extendable pole system where the poles are attached to a ceiling-mounted bracket, which can be extended outside the window (usually by pushing or pulling a lever). "Made of stainless steel, the system is vertically adjustable to stop and release at any level to allow optimum exposure to sunlight and air," says marketing manager Daphne Tan of Home Niche, which carries these systems.

They also reduce the probability of people falling out the window when trying to put out heavy loads of laundry. Four- and six-pole systems are available.

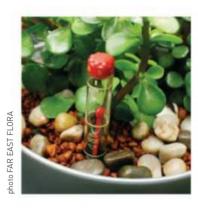
Q: MY HOME FACES THE SUN DIRECTLY, AND ON A HOT DAY, THE HEAT IS INTOLERABLE. WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION?

A: Your best bet is to stop the sun's heat before it enters your home. Get your windows protected with 3M Prestige window film. This specially treated film will cut glare and UV rays by as much as 80 per cent, and keep your rooms cooler all day. It is also graded according to different tints, so you can choose a darker tint for better protection, without marring the view.

Next, drape the windows with thick curtains in a light colour. Light hues will reflect back the sun's rays, and heavy, thick fabric will trap heat in its folds so it never reaches your interiors.

When you arrive home, open all the windows to let out the trapped heat. Let the breeze blow through and ventilate the rooms before you turn on the air-con; otherwise, it will have to work extra-hard to cool down the hot, humid rooms. Moreover, humid air will damage your belongings, with clothes and upholstered furniture attacked by mildew.





Q: I WANT TO KEEP PLANTS IN MY BALCONY, BUT THE SPACE ISN'T EXPOSED TO SUNLIGHT. I ALSO TRAVEL FREQUENTLY. WHAT ARE THE MOST SUITABLE PLANTS FOR THIS SPACE AND MY LIFESTYLE?

A: Plants soften a space and relax your mind. Your choices are limited with low-light conditions, but there are still some outdoor varieties you can consider.

"Indoor plants may need less sunlight, but most of them are fussy of their watering needs," says Pablo Inigo Pablo, senior horticulturist at Far East Flora. Indoor plants that are more drought-tolerant include cactus species, which you only need to water well once every three to four weeks; Zamiculcas, which only need a good watering once every one to two weeks; and Sansevieria (commonly known as Mother-in-Law's Tongue).

If you ever think you'll forget to water, Pablo recommends Far East Flora's Plantplus range. It has a water indicator (which looks like a thermometer), and the markings will tell you if the plants need to be watered. If the red ball bearing falls to the minimum mark, it's time to water them. When the water level is at the maximum level, the system will keep your plants hydrated for up to two weeks.



Q: IT WOULD BE NICE TO DESIGN MY OWN FURNITURE AND GET SOMEONE TO BUILD IT, BUT WILL IT END UP COSTING MUCH MORE THAN WHAT'S IN THE SHOPS?

A: It is an additional source of pride for homeowners to say they designed the furniture in their home (especially if it turns out well!). Depending on the materials used, and the construction methods, creating your own bespoke furniture could even save you money. Kelvin Teo of Space Sense says that the most commonly requested pieces he is asked to design and build

are dining tables, benches and bookshelves. "I don't get asked to do sofas, as people usually want to sit and try the sofa before they buy," he says. According to him, a customized dining table can cost as little as \$1,500. For this price, he has built one with metal legs and a homogeneous tile surface which looks like wood. "The tile had a realistic texture, is waterproof, and resistant to scratches as well, unlike real wood," he recalls. He has also built more unique designs, such as a table resembling an aeroplane wing, which cost

\$3,600. It was wrapped with an aluminium plate, riveted, and with an I-beam as the leg, connected to a metal base. Bookshelves can cost between \$2,000 and \$3,200 to build. Customised furniture can be done in a month or two. To save money, clients sometimes ask Kelvin to replicate the look of furniture they see in shops. "I can recreate the look, but because we can't get the same material, it won't look exactly like the original, although it might be cheaper," he explains. Moulded plastic furniture and other pieces that require specialised equipment cannot be made either, he adds.